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FEBRUARY!
This is Catholic Press Month.

INHALT

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ZEITSCHRIFT FUER DIE KATHOLISCHE FAMILIE

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Das Jahr 1939

Von P. Heinrich Krawitz, O.M.I.

EIN Monat des Jahres 1939 ist bereits vergangen. Elf Monate liegen noch vor uns. Immer noch fragen wir uns: Was wird das laufende Jahr uns wohl bringen? Wieviel Leiden und Sorgen und Enttäuschungen wird es wohl für uns haben? Wieviel Freuden wird es uns wohl schenken können? Es gibt aber noch eine andere Frage, eine Frage, die jeder Katholik sich am Anfange eines neuen Jahres stellen sollte. Und diese Frage lautet: Wie wird es wohl dem Katholizismus, dem Reiche Christi auf Erden, in diesem Jahre ergehen? Schwere Zeiten hat er im vergangenen Jahre durchmachen müssen. Die grossen Kulturländer, von denen die Politik der Welt abhängt, hassen ihn und suchen ihn zu vernichten. Grosse Pläne haben sich die Regierungen und Parteien ausgearbeitet, nach denen sie ganz systematisch gegen die katholische Kirche kämpfen. Wir dürfen dem nicht mehr so ruhig zuschauen, wie wir es bis heute getan haben. Es genügt nicht, dass wir mit den Köpfen schütteln, wenn wir in den Zeitungen lesen, was man heute mit uns Katholiken macht; wir müssen etwas dagegen tun. Wir müssen ganz entschlossen Hand ans Werk legen und für die Rechte und die Freiheit und den Sieg unserer katholischen Sache kämpfen. Genau so, wie die Katholikenfeinde, müssen auch wir uns einen Jahresplan ausarbeiten, nach dem wir im laufenden Jahre für die Idee Christi wirken wollen. Jeder von uns versteht doch, dass sich der Landmann und Farmer im Frühjahr hinsetzen muss, um zu überlegen, wie er seinen Samen verteilen soll, um im Herbst gut zu ernten. Ist die Sache Gottes etwa unwichtiger, dass wir mit ihr so ganz ohne Ueberlegung herumwirtschaften? Denken wir daran, dass wir Katholiken vor Gott die schwere Pflicht haben, zwei schwere Aufgaben zu erfüllen. Erstens einmal sollen wir unsere Seele heiligen, und zweitens soll das Erdenleben mit all' seiner Politik und Wirtschaft durch uns geheiligt werden. Wer nur deshalb Katholik ist, um in den Himmel kommen zu können, ist selbstsüchtig. Der Selbstsucht bleibt der Himmel aber verschlossen. Richtig katholisch, katholisch nach dem Herzen Gottes, ist nur derjenige, der ein grosses Interesse für Gott hat; der sich dafür interessiert, die Rechte Gottes auf Erden zu verteidigen, zu befestigen und zum Siege zu führen. Katholisch nennen wir uns alle. Wenn man aber wissen will, wie gross der Katholizismus eines Menschen ist, dann muss man darauf schauen, wie weit sich dieser Mensch für die Sache Gottes interessiert. Denn so gross wie dieses Interesse ist, so gross ist auch sein Katholizismus.

Wie sieht es nun mit unserem Interesse für die Sache Gottes aus? Schauen wir doch nur einmal auf das riesengrosse Interesse, mit dem die Katholikenfeinde gegen das Werk Gottes kämpfen. Ist unser Interesse, Gott zu verteidigen und seine Rechte zur Weltherrschaft zu führen, auch so gross? Kämpfen wir mit demselben Feuer und mit derselben Leidenschaft für unsere Kirche, mit dem die Gottesfeinde Gott zu stürzen und zu vernichten suchen? Nein, wir heutigen Katholiken haben dieses Feuer nicht. Wir tun nicht einmal halb soviel für Gott, wie die Gottesfeinde gegen ihn tun. Unsere Opfer für Gott sind



Neujahrsglocken — Joh. Huber, Gauting.

nicht einmal halb so gross wie die Opfer, die unsere Gegner bringen, um die Welt von Christus unabhängig zu machen. Wir unterstützen und lesen noch lange nicht soviel katholische Zeitungen und Schriften, wie es die Katholikenfeinde mit den ihren tun. Wir haben noch lange nicht soviele Versammlungen und Redner und gottespolitischen Eifer wie sie. Deshalb dürfen wir uns aber auch garnicht wundern, dass man uns heute in so fielen Ländern unsere katholischen Rechte nimmt. Sagen wir nicht: Warum lässt Gott es zu, dass seine Gläubigen so verfolgt und entrechtet werden? Fragen wir nicht so, denn nicht Gott, aber wir selbst sind schuld daran. Genau so wie Gott unsere Seele nicht heilig macht, wenn wir nicht mitbeten und mitarbeiten, genau so kann unser katholisches Leben hier auf Erden nicht gottgesegnet sein, wenn wir uns nicht die Mühe geben, daran mitzuwirken und mitzuschaffen.

Wir müssen uns Mühe geben, wir müssen Opfer bringen, erst dann wird die katholische Sache siegen können. Weder mit Anstrengung noch mit Zeit und Geld dürfen wir geizen, wenn es um die Rechte unseres hl. Glaubens geht. Bis heute sind wir aber furchtbar geizig mit all diesen Sachen gewesen. Wir fürchten nichts so sehr als Anstrengung und Geldopfer. Doch ohne diese Opfer geht es nicht. Denn das Beten allein kann uns nicht retten. Wir müssen auch unseren guten Willen, unsere Kraft und unser Geld für Gott hingeben können, erst dann sind wir ganze Bürger des Reiches Christi auf Erden.

Entschliessen wir uns also zur katholischen Tat. Stehen wir auf zum Kampfe für die Rechte Gottes. Die Katholiken jeder einzelnen Gemeinde müssen sich jetzt am Anfang des neuen Jahres versammeln und beraten, was sie in ihrer Gemeinde bis zum 31. Dezember 1939 für den katholischen Glauben tun wollen. Man kann ja

doch in jeder Gemeinde so viele höchst wichtige katholische Werke durchführen. Fragt euch einmal: Habt ihr bei euch schon katholische Vereine? Wenn nicht, dann gründet sie in diesem Jahre. Gehören alle Katholiken eurer Gemeinde schon euren Vereinen an? Wenn nicht, dann beratet, wie ihr sie bekommen könnt. Habt ihr schon alle eine katholische Zeitung? Denkt darüber nach und beratet auch, wie man auch denjenigen eurer Gemeinde eine katholische Zeitung in die Hand drücken könnte, die so arm sind, dass sie das Zeitungsgeld nicht aufzubringen imstande sind. Vielleicht könnte manche Vereinskasse da helfen. Interessiert euch auch für die katholikenfeindlichen Zeitungen, die in eure Gemeinde kommen. Mancher eurer Nachbarn könnte vielleicht von der katholischen Wahrheit überzeugt werden, wenn nur jemand zu ihm hingehen wollte, ihn zu überzeugen. Könntet ihr euch auch nicht während dieses Jahres einen katholischen Redner einladen, der euch durch Vorträge über die Ziele und Wege der katholischen Aktion Aufklärung geben würde? Denkt auch darüber nach und beratet euch mit euren Priestern und unter euch selbst. Sagt nicht, ihr hättet kein Geld für solche Dinge. Opfert, arbeitet und müht euch, denn die Stunde des katholischen Kampfes ist da. Scheuet weder Anstrengung noch Zeit und Opfer, denn sonst gehen uns unsere katholischen Rechte verloren.

Gott will sein Reich hier auf Erden haben, wir sollen es aufbauen.



NABEKS PFERD

Von Leo Koszella.

DER Araber Nabek war ein armer Schlucker. Sein einziger Schatz und seine einzige Freude war sein Pferd.

Aber was für ein Tier war es auch! Weiss wie Schnee, schnell wie der Wind und bewundernswert zahm und verständig. Solch ein schönes Pferd hatte gewiss niemand in ganz Arabien.

Alle beneideten Nabek um dieses Ross, am meisten aber beneidete ihn der reiche Dager. Er kam häufig in Nabeks Zelt und redete ihm zu, ihm das Pferd zu verkaufen.

"Widersetz' dich doch nicht, du bist ja ein armer Schlucker! Und ich gebe dir für dieses eine Pferd zehn andere und Kamele und eine schöne Waffe."

Aber Nabek wollte nichts davon wissen.

"Einen Freund gibt man um keinen Preis in der Welt weg. Ich will lieber mein Leben verlieren als das Pferd."

Stets musste Dager unverrichteter Sache fortgehen. Nabek liess ihm nicht die geringste Hoffnung, dass er je dieses schönste Ross Arabiens bekommen könnte. Aber das reizte die Begierde des reichen Dager nur. Er konnte das Pferd nicht kaufen: also beschloss er, es durch Hinterlist in seine Gewalt zu bekommen.

Eines Tages erblickte Nabek, als er heimkehrte, einen in Lumpen gehüllten Bettler, der im Staube des sandigen Weges lag und laut ächzte. Nabek näherte sich ihm, blieb an seiner Seite stehen. Der Bettler begann zu wimmern:

"Erbarme dich meiner, o guter Mensch! Ich stamme aus ferner Gegend und kenne nicht die Wege in diesem Lande. Ich habe mich verirrt und schon drei Tage nichts mehr gegessen . . ."

Nabek tat der Bettler leid, und obwohl er selbst arm war, beschloss er, dem Verirrten zu helfen.

"Setz' dich auf mein Pferd! Ich werde dich in mein Zelt mitnehmen."

"Oh, ich habe keine Kräfte, um mich zu erheben! . . ." begann der Bettler noch lauter zu ächzen.

Nabek stieg vom Pferde, hob den Bettler auf und setzte ihn mit grosser Mühe in den Sattel. Da aber . . . packte der Gerettete die Zügel und pfiff dem Pferd. Das Pferd stellte sich auf die Hinterbeine und rannte im Galopp weiter. Der Reiter aber wandte sich um und schrie dem bestürzten Nabek zu:

"Verabschiede dich von deinem Pferde, du wirst es nie mehr wiedersehen! Ich bin Dager!"

Nabek wusste, dass er Dager nicht mehr einholen würde.

"Halt! . . . Halt! . . . Hör' zu! . . ."

Dager hielt in der Ferne und sagte:

"Fordere von mir, was du willst, aber nicht das Pferd! Das Pferd gebe ich nicht mehr her."

Nabek hatte das Unglück alle Kräfte geraubt. Er schleppte sich in dem Staube mühselig weiter.

"Ich weiss, dass du mir das Pferd nicht mehr zurückgeben wirst, und kein Schatz der Welt wird es mir ersetzen. Allah wollte es augenscheinlich so. Ich bitte dich aber um eins: Sage niemandem, auf welche Weise du das Pferd bekommen hast!"

Dager verwunderte sich.

"Was kann dir denn daran liegen? Weshalb soll ich es niemandem sagen?"

"Wenn die Leute erfahren, was du tatest, werden sie fürchten, anderen im Notfall zu helfen: sie werden ihn des Betruges verdächtigen. Wie viel Unschuldige könnten dadurch leiden!"

Dager wurde nachdenklich und grübelte über die Worte des edlen Nabek. Er schämte sich seiner Tat. Und er stieg vom Pferde, reichte Nabek die Zügel und sagte:

"Verzeihe mir!"

PRESSE MONAT

Was hast du getan um mitzuhelfen in der grossen Arbeit der katholischen Presse?

DER HOCHZEITSGAST

Von Josefine Ehmann

IN ihrem heimeligen Zimmer sitzt die junge Braut. Nur wenige Tage trennen sie noch von ihrem Fest. Da will sie einen stillen Abend benützen, um nochmal zu kramen in den bunten Dingen, die sie in ihren Mädchenjahren gesammelt. Was man doch alles des Verwahrens wert fand! Achtlos zerknittern die hastigen Hände ein Ding nach dem andern. Da finden sich, schon längst vergessen, noch ein paar Blätter mit steilen, etwas gekünstelten Kinderbuchstaben beschrieben. Ach, das kleine, schwarze Mariele! Was war aus dem wohl geworden? Dass man sich so sehr verlieren konnte, innerhalb weniger Jahre. In kindlichem Eifer hatten sie sich einst Treue versprochen mit den heissesten Schwüren. Und wenn das grosse Glück einmal kam, dann sollte das kleine, schwarze Mariele Brautjungfer sein. Wie war das zierliche Ding damals vor Freude gesprungen! Wenn sie es einlud?—Freilich als Brautjungfer nicht — aber so, einfach als Gast. Ganz leicht mochte es nicht sein. Mama würde es wohl kaum begreifen. Und was Gerhard wohl sagte? — Sie musste den Gedanken fallen lassen, es würde kaum anders gehn. — Aber er liess sie nicht los. Sie wollte mit ihrem Bräutigam sprechen.

Der traf sie am nächsten Morgen, als sie inmitten all der aufgetürmten Herrlichkeiten stand, die ihre künftigen Tage reich und schön machen sollten.

"Hat Mama die Liste der Geladenen nun endgültig abgeschlossen, Elise?" fragte er sie.

"Wünschest du sie noch zu verlängern?" meinte sie lachend.

"Eigentlich ja, um einen ganz bescheidenen Gast. — Weisst du, ich hab' gestern noch einmal in Erinnerungen gekramt."

"Gerhard, ich auch! Und ich hab' auch noch einen Gast gefunden."

"Wie günstig für mich! Nenne ihn doch, damit ich sehe, ob der meine konkurrieren kann mit ihm."

"Das kann er gewiss," lachte sie fein.

"Doch ich will den Deinen erst kennen."

"Kennen —. So viel kann ich dir wohl nicht erzählen, dass du ihn kennst. Ich kann dir nur sagen, ich stünde heut' nicht so vor dir, wär' er nicht gewesen. Er war mein gutes Gewissen, so lang wir auf der Schulbank gesessen — und auch später hat es mich von manchem Streich abgehalten, dachte ich an ihn. Ich hab' ihn dann ganz aus den Augen verloren. Kürzlich erst hab' ich zufüllig erfahren, dass er Priester geworden und draussn in einer kleinen Landpfarre sitzt. Den hätt' ich so gern unter den Menschen, die um uns sein werden, mit heimlich taxierenden Blicken und einem Schwall geschliffener Worte."

"Gerhard, doch nicht alle!"

"Nein, Liebe, gewiss nicht. Doch er wär' einer mehr von den Guten, einer, der das Niveau unseres Festes emporhebt, bloss durch sein Dabeisein."

"So bitt' ihn, zu kommen!"

"Ja. Und dein Gast?"

"Ach, es war vielleicht nur eine flüchtige Laune — oder soll ich sie nennen? — Eine kleine Freundin der Kindheit, ein armes, bleichsüchtiges Ding. Mutter durfte nicht wissen von unserer heimlichen Freundschaft. Sie war gar nicht standesgemäss. Nur ein paar Mal nach der Schule bin ich mit ihr gelaufen, hinaus zu den Baracken, aber eine scheltende Alte hat mich immer vertrieben. Vor ein paar Jahren hab' ich sie nochmal gesehen. In einem Geschäft hat sie Mama und mir die Tür geöffnet. Erst später fiel es mir ein, wem die grossen, schwarzen Augen gehörten, die mich halb scheu und halb dreist angeguckt hatten."

"Und die möchtest du einladen?" Wie ein Vater, dem es Spass macht, wenn er seinem Töchterchen einen launigen Wunsch erfüllen kann, sieht er sie an. "Wenn es dich drängt, so lad' sie doch ein!"

"Gelt, es ist unklug?"

"Wenn es dich freut, und das arme Ding vielleicht auch, so darf es ruhig ein wenig unklug erscheinen."

Am nächsten Abend hielt ein Auto vor den Baracken. Sorglich half der grosse Mann der zierlichen Dame beim Aussteigen. Ihr strahlendes Gesicht hob sich kaum aus dem Pelz. "Du, auf die erstaunten Augen freue ich mich!" kicherte sie. "Warte, hier muss es sein —. Oder hier neben?"

"Wir wollen fragen."

Schon standen staunende Kinder und neugierige Frauen an den niederen Türen. "Fräulein Gruber? Die kennen wir nicht. Da haben Sie sich wohl verfahren."

"Das ist vielleicht die Marie, die nebenan?"

"Wer fragt denn nach der?" So rief's durcheinander.

"Komm, ich glaube, hier ist es," flüsterte Elise in plötzlich erwachender Scheu. Und dann standen sie in der niederen Stube. Beklemmend schlug die eingesperrte Luft ihnen entgegen. Ein Kindlein wimmerte verborgen im Dunkel. Ein kleiner Hund knurrte heiser. Schwerfällig schob sich ein altes Weib näher.

"Küss die Hand die Herrschaften, küss die Hand! Sieht sich doch einmal ein Mensch um nach unserem Elend."

"Wo ist das Mariele? Hat nicht einmal das Mariele Gruber dahier gewohnt?" fragte die Dame beklommen.

"Marie, ja die Marie! Schauen Sie sich das Elend nur an, gnädige Frau! Ich weiss nicht, wie ich das verdient hab'. Zieht man so ein Gür auf, und wenn es was zu verdeinen anfängt, kommt es mit so einem Balg her, und dann wird's auch noch krank, kann nicht leben und sterben. Und so können wir alle zusammen verhungern. Ich sag' es ihr ohnehin jeden Tag, hätt' sie mir gefolgt, es hätt' nicht kommen müssen so weit."

"Tante, hör' auf!" schrie es da gellend aus der Ecke. Nun merkte man erst in dem düsteren Winkel ein Bett. Aber die junge Kranke hatte sich schluchzend in die schmutzigen Kissen gegraben, und nur die schmalen, zuckenden Schultern leuchteten weiss unter den kurzen, pechschwarzen Locken.

Leise tritt Elise zum Bett. Sie ist so hilflos dem Elend gegenüber, weiss nicht, was tun und was sagen, und tut das Ungeschickteste, das sie nur konnte. "Ich wollte dich zur Hochzeit ein-

laden, Mariele, nun bist du krank."

Da sieht die Weinende auf — massloses Staunen im feuchten, fiebernden Blick. Aber gleich wieder vergräbt sie das Gesicht in den fiebernden Händen und weint ganz verzweifelt. Scheu streicht ihr Elise übers feuchtschwarze Haar. Weiss nimmer, was sagen. Und die Kranke spürt etwas von lang entbehrter Liebe, fasst nach der Hand, der weissen, gepflegten, und legt die fiebernde Wange daran. Und dann kommt die stockende Beichte—:

"Du hast mich lieb gehabt, damals, seither gar niemand mehr—. Du ahnst nicht, wie oft ich vor eurem Gartentor stand. Und du kamst niemals heraus— —. Ich habe Botengänge gemacht —dann kam ich in ein Geschäft—. Du warst einmal dort. Gleich erkannte ich dich! Damals war ich schon — o, was musst du dir denken! Aber



du, du hattest es immer so gut und mich hatte niemand, gar niemand lieb — und da, da hab' ich dem Ersten geglaubt, der mir schön tat — —. Und dann, dann kam alles andre—. Du, du kannst das nicht begreifen, wie das ist, wenn man, kaum aufgehoben, wieder weggeworfen wird. Wie wild das einen macht — wie ein Tier ist man, das, einmal versengt, erst recht in die Flammen hineinrennen muss. — Aber mein Kind hab' ich mir gerettet. Nicht, weil ich mich gefürchtet hab' vor der Schuld. O nein, Elise! Das war mir alles so gleich. Aber l i e b hab' ich's gehabt, mein Kindlein, so lieb. — Hab' es wohl in Pflege tun müssen. Aber eine liebe Bauersfrau hat es gut, gut versorgt. — Doch seit ich krank bin — Monate schon — seither konnt' ich nimmer bezahlen. Und nun ist es da. Das Arme—ist auch immer krank. Dort, sieh es dir an. — Lieb! Schau, wie es dich anlacht! Mit deinem Pelz möchte es spielen. Lass es! Die kleinen Händchen schaden ihm nicht. — Ach — wenn ich sterbe, was wird dann aus ihm!" Und neues, heftiges Weinen durchschüttelte sie.

"Komm, Elise," bat der Mann an der Tür. Da stand sie bei ihm: "Wir müssen was tun! Gerhard, was können wir tun?"

"Wir überlegen es, Liebe! Aber jetzt komm!"

"Ich muss es ihr sagen." Und in erwachender Mütterlichkeit beugt sie sich über die Kranke: "Nun musst du ganz still sein, Mariele. Wir wollen dir helfen. Mein Bräutigam weiss ganz sicher Rat. Und ich komme bald wieder zu dir."

Die dunklen Augen der Kranken werden ganz gross und weit. Dank liegt darin und Flehen. Die Stimme gehorcht nicht, nur die feuchten, zitternden Hände klammern sich fest, wollen nicht loslassen.

"Komm," bittet Gerhard aufs neue. Da geht sie. —

Elise weiss nicht, wie sie ins Auto gekommen. Sie ist noch ganz erdrückt von dem Erlebten.

"Gerhard, ich kann mich auf einmal all der schönen Dinge nicht freuen, die auf uns warten. Dass man s o leben kann, Gerhard, hab' ich nicht gewusst."

"Trägt sie nicht selber auch Schuld?"

"Schuld? Ach ja. Aber denk' doch, wie das Leben sie angefasst hat, wie so ganz anders als uns! Schuld. Davon darf man jetzt nicht reden. Helfen muss man. Weisst du, die müsste heraus in eine Anstalt — und ihr Kindlein, das soll sie wieder der guten Bauersfrau geben. Das können wir doch leicht bezahlen. Gelt, Lieber, das können wir doch?"

"Die Kranke wird unsere Hilfe wohl nicht lange mehr brauchen. Aber das Kind. Ob wir uns verpflichten können dazu?"

"O doch. Wir müssen uns etwas einschränken und könnten unsere Hochzeitsreise gut etwas kürzen, könnten —"

"Kind, wie trollig sich's anhört, wenn du vom Einschränken sprichst. Nein. Einschränken muss man sich deshalb noch nicht —"

"So helfen wir ihr? Aber gleich! Noch vor der Hochzeit. Ja?"

"Ja, vor der Hochzeit, du kleine, heilige Elisabeth du—. Aber wie, wenn du noch andere so arme Menschen antriffst?"

Da flog ein Zug leiser Schelmerei über ihr ernstes, junges Gesicht. "Dann werden wir uns doch einschränken müssen," lächelte sie. "Gerhard, ist es eigentlich recht, dass die Menschen unter so verschiedenen Lebensbedingungen existieren?" — "Du wirst ja noch die reinste Kommunistin. Wie stellst du dir's vor, dass alle unter den gleichen Verhältnissen leben?"

"So mein' ich es nicht. Das gibt es ja nicht, dass alle es immer ganz gleich haben können. Aber so grosse Unterschiede müssten nicht sein. Oder — Gerhard, tu ich dir weh, wenn ich so spreche?"

"Elisabeth, nein. — Du gräbst nun schon wieder verschüttete Wahrheiten auf, die mich einmal so sehr beschäftigten, dass ich meinen Lebensberuf in der sozialen Arbeit zu sehen glaubte. Dann waren die Möglichkeiten so verlockend für mich, und immer mehr schwand vor den eigenen Interessen der Gedanke an die grossen Ideen. Dann galt es, dich zu erringen, und da trat — alles andere zurück."

"So hätte ich dich also daran gehindert?"

"Nein, Elise, so meint' ich es nicht."

"Gerhard, hindern möcht' ich dich nicht. Ich bitte dich, lass das nie zu! Du musst mir deine Gedanken erklären, und ich will mich bemühen, dir immer besser zu folgen. Ich will, so gut ich kann, dir stets eine ganz treue Helferin im Leben sein."

Da zog er ihre Hände leis an die Lippen und dann hielt er sie fest, und es war ein stummes Versprechen der beiden und ein Anfang zu einem neuen, tieferen Leben.

Durch Trunk und Spiel

Erzählung von Er. Krafft

I.

IN siener Malstube zu Rom, wohin er eigens gekommen war, um Modelle und Vorbilder zu suchen für das Gemälde "La cena" (das letzte Abendmahl Christi), sass der grosse Meister Lionardo da Vinci — tiefnachdenklich und brütend.

Vor ihm stand auf hohem Gestelle der Zeichenentwurf für jenes Gemälde, nach Oertlichkeit und Personen völlig geordnet und harrend der näheren Ausführung.

Der Skizzierstift in der geschickten Hand des berühmten Künstlers ruhte, ein Seufzer stieg aus seiner Brust empor.

Tag und Nacht, Wochen und Monate hatte er Geist und Einbildungssinn zermartert, um einen gänzlich neuen, vollwürdigen Vorentwurf für Christi letztes Liebesmahl mit seinen Jüngern zu erfinden und künstlerisch edel darzustellen. Nun war ihm dieser schwerste Wurf in seinem Vorhaben auch gelungen — allein das Werk stockte ttrotzdem: Lionardo hatte bis jetzt kein Modell, keinen sichtbaren Vorwurf gefunden für die Hauptgestalt seines Gemäldes, für Christus.

Richt- und rasttlos war er vom Osten zum Westen, vom Norden zum Süden der "Ewigen Stadt" umhergeirrt, überall spähend, überall seinen hohen Zweck verfolgend — vergebens.

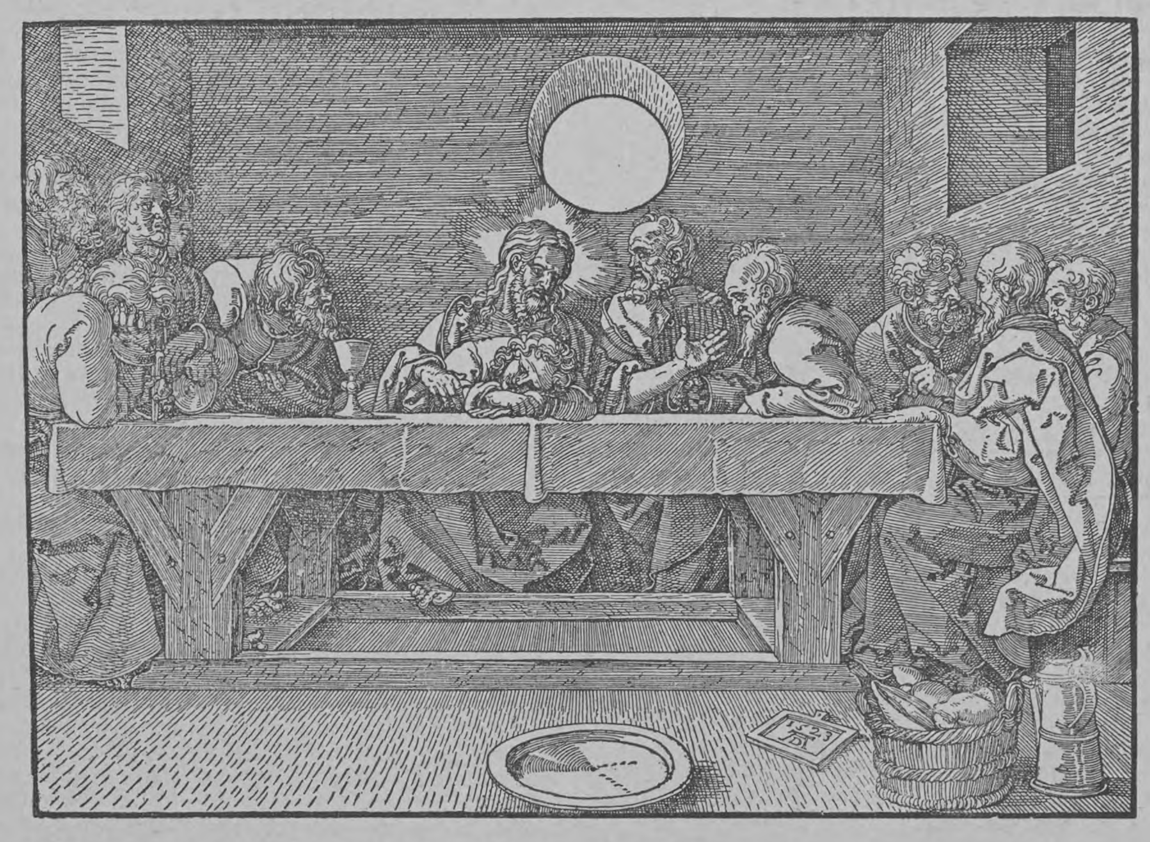
Nirgends hatte er gefunden, was er suchte. Wohl waren ihm Hunderte von schönen, edelgeformten Gesichtern aufgestossen; wohl hatten ihm aus manchen Zügen hoher Sinn und grosse Vortrefflichkeit in die Augen geleuchtet — aber die rechte Vereinigung von äusserer Schönheit und innerer Hoheit, wie er sie für das Antlitz Jesu benötigte, hatte er vergebens gesucht.

Hastig sprang dr Meister von seinem Stuhle auf; ein Ruck seines feingeschnittenen Kopfes schleuderte die langen Locken, die ihm über Stirne und Schläfen niedergerollt waren, in den Nacken zurück, seine hohe Gestalt reckte sich energisch empor.

"Mut, nur kein Sinken der Energie!" raffte er sich auf in leisem Selbstgespräche. "Was mir gestern und vorgestern nicht gelang, kann heute wohl gelingen. Also von neuem auf die Schule!"

Er warf seinen wallenden Mantel malerisch über die Schultern, drückte das Barett auf die wallenden Locken und schickte sich an, sein Atelier zu verlassen.

Vorher aber sandte er noch ein glühendes Gebet zu Christus empor — um das Gelingen seines Planes.



"Mein Herr und Heiland," flüsterten seine Lippen, "lass mich finden, was ich suche, auf dass ich dein Bild würdig und zur Verehrung zwingend herzustellen vermag!"

Er trat ins Freie; bald wallte ihm der volle Strom des römischen Menschenlebens entgegen.

Wieder spähte und forschte er nach rechts und links, auf Strassen und freien Plätzen nach einem Christuskopfe — abermals vergeblich.

Schon bemächtigte sich des Meisters eine gewisse Ermüdung und Misstimmung, schon dachte er an den Heimweg — als sich vor ihm das Portal einer Kirche öffnete und einer Gruppe junger Leute Austritt verlieh. Einer von diesen Jünglingen sprach gerade, und aus seiner Stimme

klang dem aufhorchenden Meister ein solch weicher Wohlklang und zugleich eine solche Tiefe und Innigkeit zu Ohren, dass er der Gruppe fast unwillkürlich auf dem Fusse folgte.

Der Jüngling sprach mit Wärme und Begeisterung vom kirchlichen Chorgesange; aus seinen Worten ging hervor, dass er der erste Chorsänger in der eben verlassenen Kirche war.

"Wohlklang und Innigkeit der Stimme," flüsterte der Meister, "Frömmigkeit und echter Gottessinn! Wahrhaftig, diese inneren Vorzüge können kaum in einem anderen als in schönem Körper wohnen!"

Bei gegebener Gelegenheit musterte Lionardo die Züge des Chorsängers angelegentlich — und er hatte sich nicht getäuscht: jener Jüngling vereinigte so wohlgebildete Gesichtszüge mit einer solchen Milde des ganzen Wesens, dass der Maler sofort mit sich einig wurde — dieser und nur dieser vermöge das Modell zu seinem Christusgemälde abzugeben.

Auf einem öffentlichen Platze trennte sich die Gruppe der kirchlichen Chorsänger, um auf verschiedenen Wegen den Wohnungen zuzustreben.

Lionardo da Vinci trat dem erkorenen Jünglinge in den Weg.

"Einen Augenblick, Signor!" bat er herzlich, während seine Augen von Hoffnung leuchteten.

"Womit kann ich Ihnen zu Diensten sein?"

Die Stimme des Chorsängers klang auch jetzt wieder so mild, so vertrauenerweckend!

"Ich bin der Maler Lionardo da Vinci," versetzte der Meister.

Der Jüngling machte eine höfliche Verbeugung: wie die meisten gebildeten Italiener, so kannte auch er den berühmten Meister der Malkunst von seinen Bildern und seinem Ruhme her.

"Ich suche für mein "Abendmahl" einen würdigen Christuskopf," fuhr Lionardo fort, "und in Ihrem Gesichte glaube ich das richtige Modell für das Heilandsantlitz gefunden zu haben. Darf ich Sie bitten, mir Ihre Züge zu jenem hehren Zwecke zu entleihen?"

"Aber, Meister!"

"O, lassen Sie mich keine Fehlbitte tun! Der Zweck meiner Bitte entschuldigt gewiss die Kühnheit meines Vorgehens, so dass Sie mir darob nicht zürnen dürfen."

"Ich zürne Ihnen deshalb gewiss nicht."

"Und doch zaudern Sie, meinem Wunsche zu willfahren?"

"Ich halte mich eben — für unwürdig, das Modell zu Ihrem Jesu-Antlitze abzugeben."

"Sie lieber, bescheidener Mensch! Gerade aus dieser Antwort ergibt sich auch Ihre Würdigkeit. Ich bitte nochmals um Erfüllung meines Wunsches. Sie tun ein gottgefälliges Werk damit, da Sie mir zur Hauptperson meines Bildes verhelfen und später, nach Vollendung des Gemäldes, Tausende zur Andacht zum Weltheilande ansporen werden."

"Ist dem so, dann bin ich freilich bereit, in der gewünschten Weise zur Vollendung Ihres Bildes beizutragen."

"Dank, tausend Dank! Und wie darf ich das Modell zu meinem Christuskopfe anreden?"

"Ich heisse Pietro Bandinelli." — — —

Schon nach einiger Zeit leuchtete das himmlisch verklärte, durch und durch verklärte Antlitz des Chorsängers Bandinelli von dem Zeichenentwurfe Lionardos als Mittelpunkt des geplanten Bildes auf die Besucher der Arbeitsstätte des Meisters hernieder, und jedermann überbot sich im Lobe von dessen Vortrefflichkeit.

II.

Einige Zeit ist verflossen.

Meister Lionardo da Vinci hatte mit Bienenfleiss, aber auch mit höchstem Bedachte an seinem Gemälde-Entwurfe weitergearbeitet; Monat um Monat war dieser der Vollendung entgegengeeilt: zur Rechten und Linken des Heilandes reihten sich die edel gehaltenen Gstalten der Apostel an, jeder in seiner Eigenart und Charaktereigentümlichkeit — vom zartfühlenden, jungfräulichen Johannes bis zum energischen, willensgrossen, christus-begeisterten Petrus.

Aber ganz vollendet war das Bild noch nicht: es fehlte noch die Figur des Verräters Judas Ischariot, und mit deren Ausführung beschäftigte sich Lionardos Geist soeben aufs angelegentlichste.

Aber wie er ehedem nach einem würdigen, der Erhabenheit Jesu entsprechenden Modell-Kopfe für den Heiland gar lange vergeblich gesucht, so machte ihm nunmehr die Auffindung eines solchen für den Verräter-Jünger grosse Schwierigkeiten.

Gewiss — Gaunerköpfe und Missetäter-Gesichter gab es übergenug; aber ein Judas-Kopf war schwer auffindlich.

In tiefes Nachdenken hierüber versunken, schritt Meister Lionardo eines Nachmittags wieder durch das Gewirre der Strassen Roms, als er auf dem Postamente eines öffentlichen Brunnens eine Bettlergestalt kauern sah, die sogleich sein forschendes Künstlerauge fesselte: die Züge trugen den Stempel ausgeprägter Verkommenheit. Wirr und strähnig fielen die dunklen Haare auf die eingefallenen Schläfen und um die hässlich gerunzelte Stirn nieder; die Augen starrten unheimlich drein, die wulstigen Lippen schienen Giftdünste auszuhauchen.

"Ein Judas-Kopf," entschlüpfte es dem Munde Lionardos, während er auf den Bettler näher zutrat.

Aber wer beschreibt sein Staunen, ja seinen Schrecken, als der verkommene Mensch, noch ehe der Maler selber ihn angesprochen, ihm mit hohler, brüchiger Stimme zurief:

"Ah! Sieh da, ein alter Bekannter! Suchen Sie wieder einen Modell-Kopf, Meister?"

"Wie — was? Sie kennen mich?" stotterte Lionardo.

"Warum sollte ich Sie nicht kennen, Meister? Sie nahmen ja doch ehedem meinen Kopf zum Modell für Ihr Christusbild!"

Der Maler taumelte vor Schrecken ein paar Schritte zurück.

"Sie sind also — Pietro — Bandinelli?" kam es silbenweise von seinen Lippen.

"Der bin ich," versetzte der Bettler frech und ohne Anflug von Scham oder Reue. "Nicht wahr, ich habe mich verändert seit jener Zeit? Ja, ja, es ist mir auch schlecht ergangen. Ich geriet in eine Spieler- und Trinkergesellschaft, verlor darüber meine Stelle als Solo- und Chorsänger und habe nun meist nicht so viele Soldi (Soldo: vier Pfennige) in der Tasche, dass ich meinen Durst mit "Lebenswasser" (Branntwein) zu stillen vermag. Aber jetzt wird's besser werden! Ich werde jetzt wieder etwas verdienen, und zwar durch Modellsitzen — nicht wahr, Meister?"

In echt gaunerhafter Zudringlichkeit streckte er Meister Lionardo seine schmutzige Rechte entgegen; allein dieser schlug nicht ein, sondern liess sprachlos seine Augen über den Bettler gleiten: sollte er einen Aufschneider vor sich haben oder sollte jener Mensch die Wahrheit sagen?

Aber — wirklich!

Je länger seine Blicke auf den verkommenen Zügen des Bettlers ruhten, desto mehr wurde es ihm zur grausamen Gewissheit, dass er in Wirklichkeit vor Pietro Bandinelli stehe.

Einige Anklänge an dessen frühere Schönheit

und edles Aussehen waren wohl noch ersichtlich — sonst aber hatten Trunk und Spiel alles Edle, alles Ansprechende aus dem Gesichte des Bettlers weggetilgt, um dafür die deutlichen Spuren der Gemeinheit und Niedertracht zurückzulassen.

Lionardo schüttelte sich, wie wenn er sich eines schlimmen Zaubers enttäussern wollte. Eine Weile legten sich seine schlanken Künstlerhände vor die Augen — er vermochte die grausige Verwandluig vor sich nicht mehr zu sehen.

Als aber der Bettler stets zudringlicher auf ihn einredete und nach Verdienst rief, wandte sich der Meister um und sagte mit einem herzerschütternden Seufzer:

"Folgen Sie mir! Sie sind das richtige Modell für eine Judasfigur . . ."

Im Jahre 1499 war die berühmte "Cena" Lionardos da Vinci fertiggestellt.

Nicht bloss die Kunstkenner und Liebhaber der religiösen Malerei lobten Herz und Auge an den wundersamen Gestalten des Gemäldes; nein, auch das gewöhnliche Volk staunte sie an und erbaute sich daran.

Lionardos Name schwebte auf gar vielen Lippen, und man war allgemein der festen Ueberzeugung, dass die Menschheit um ein Kunstwerk ersten Ranges reicher geworden.

Am vollendetsten und bedeutsamsten fand man die Gestalten Christi und des Judas Ischariot; erstere pries man göttergleich, unübertrefflich schön und edel: von göttlicher Hoheit umflossen und doch wieder von solcher Milde und Menschenfreundlichkeit war diese Christusfigur, dass der Beschauer sich von tiefster Ergriffenheit gepackt fühlte.

Die Judassfigur aber nannte man den Triumph einer kunstvollen Darstellung von Menschenverworfenheit und Sinnenniedertracht: ein Gesicht von ausgeprägter Verworfenheit, in dem Habgier und Selbstsucht jeden edlen Zug ausgelöscht haben, erfüllte alle mit Grausen.

Der tückisch-grausame Zug um den Mund, die zusammengekniffenen Lippen, der lauernde Zug der Augen und vor allem die raubtierartig um die Geldbörse gekrallten Finger liessen vor solcher Verkommenheit fast erzittern. Wahrhaftig — so konnte der wahre Judas ausgesehen haben, der seinen Herrn und Meister, seinen Freund und Wohltäter an die Henkersknechte auslieferte; der sich nicht scheute, durch einen Kuss, den sonst so edlen Liebesbeweis unter den Menschen, jenen greulichen Verrat auszuüben.

Konnten diese beiden so grundverschiedenen Gesichter — das Christus-Antlitz und die Judaszüge — von ein und derselben Person stammen?

Niemand ahnte diese schauerliche Wahrheit; niemand vermutete, dass die Sünde, dass Spiel und Trunk jene Person aus einem Christus-Ebenbilde zu einem Judas gemacht hatten.



DIE KOSTEN

Von Franz Johann Biersack.

Dem Waltinger ist das Weib gestorben. War eine gute Hauserin, die Kreszenz. Kleinleizig und mager ist alles übereinander beim Waltinger hinten. Einschichtig, arm. Die Waltingerin hat grad zugreifen müssen, dass es halt umgegangen ist mit Müh und Not. Und jetzt ist sie ihm weggestorben, dem Waltinger.

Die Leich ist am Freitag gewesen. Sind mehr Leut wie bei mancher Grossbäuerin hinter der Truh hergegangen. Hat sie ein jedes leiden mögen die Waltingerin. Und die Kirche hernach — gedruckt voll war sie, ja. Sogar die Orgel hat gespielt mit allen Registern, wie es sich die Waltingerin all' ihr Lebtag nicht träumen hätte lassen.

Sind etliche Tage vergangen.

Der Waltinger steht vor dem Herrn Pfarrer und will die Leich zahlen. "Und grad schön ham Sie's halt umig'richt't in die Ewigkeit, Herr Pfarrer, soviel schön . . ."

"Ist schon recht," sagt der Herr Pfarrer, "war ein seelengutes Leut auch, deine Hauserin, gell?"

"Ja, Herr Pfarrer, das war sie, und eine Hauserin wie sie im Buch steht, war sie — und zahlen möcht ich halt nachher auch gleich."

"O mein," wehrt der geistliche Herr ab, "Waltinger, wär schon recht, wirst so Auslagen genug haben, lass es sein, hast ja eh nit zu viel . . .!"

Da macht der Waltinger ein dankbares Gesicht und schüttelt dem Herrn Pfarrer die Hand. "Nachher sag ich halt tausendmal Vergelts Gott, tausendmal," stammelt er gerührt.

Weil es schon im Weg liegt, geht er auch gleich ins Schulhaus hinein. Erst läuft die Red hin und her und am End fragt der Waltinger auch den Herrn Oberlehrer um die Schuldigkeit.

"Ach," denkt der Oberlehrer, "was will ich da schon verlangen?" Und dann sagt er: "Mei, Waltinger, gibst mir halt die Hälfte von dem, was der Herr Parrer gekriegt hat, gell . . ."

Da kann der Waltinger das erste Mal wieder lachen, seit ihm seine Hauserin gestorben ist, weil es gar so schön aufeinander trifft.

Und während er dem Herrn Oberlehrer die Hand schüttelt, sagt er: "Fünfhundertmal Vergelts Gott, Herr Oberlehrer . . . Fünfhundertmal!"

DAS ALLERLETZTE KIND

Erzählung der Gegenwart., von Christel Bröhl

DRAUSSEN ging ein strahlender Sonnentag zu Ende. Nun ja, in dem grauen Armutszimmer einer Mietskaserne merkte man nicht viel davon. Die Fenster gingen nach Norden, obwohl die nahen, gegenüberliegenden Häuser der schmalen, luftlosen Gasse schon dafür sorgten, dass keine Sonne hereingekommen wäre, selbst wenn sie es gewollt hätte. Aber die alternde Frau wusste von der Sonne, und sie hatte es der jungen Frau, die in den Kissen des armen Bettes lag, mit ein paar Blumen aus ihrem kargen Stadtgärtchen zu wissen getan. Auch die Kinder, die vier, babbelten trunken und glücklich von der Sonne, wenn sie abends müde und verspielt aus Nachbarstrassen den Weg in die Wohnung zurückfanden. Nur die Mutter tat, als höre sie es nicht, kümmere sich nicht darum, freue sich nicht daran. Dabei hatte man die warme Sonne nach einem Winter, der hart und streng fast bis in den Mai hinein gedauert, doch so sehnsüchtig erwartet und erfleht. Aber die Mutter kümmerte sich nicht darum. Sie lag in den Kissen und weinte, und wenn sie nicht weinte, starrte sie mit einem unbeschreiblichen Ausdruck gegen die graue Decke, von der der Kalk bröckelte.

Der Sonnentag ging zu Ende, und Frau Anna Wielertz dachte ans Heimgehen. Sie hatte ja auch eine Familie. Nicht selten kam es vor, dass sie aus dem warmen Kreise spät am Abend oder gar in der Nacht als Helferin zu einer Frau gerufen wurde, wie vor neun Tagen gegen Mitternacht zu Lisabeth Heimling in die Mittlere Kranzenstrasse. Die gute Wielertz war schon an allerhand gewohnt. Aber wie in jener Nacht ein Bürschlein vor ihrer Tür gestanden war und aus kalkweissem Gesicht mit übergrossen Angstaugen gefleht hatte: "Die Mutter — — Sie sollen 'mal kommen — — uns' Mutter stirbt — — —," das war ihr ins Gebein gegangen und hatte ein Erbarmen geweckt, das in diesen neun Tagen, da sie sich um die Wöchnerin mühte, nicht geringer geworden war, eher sich noch verstärkt hatte. Denn das kleine Wesen, dem sie mit Gottes Beistand zum Leben auf dieser Erde verhelfen durfte, verlor vor zwei Wochen auf eine schreckliche Weise seinen Vater. Die modernen Tatzen iner Riesenmaschine in der Fabrik hatten den kräftigen Mann in Sekundenschnelle bis zur Unkenntlichkeit zugerichtet. Und das, nachdem er jahrelang erwerbslos gewesen und erst seit Wochen wieder angestellt worden war. Die Frau Lisabeth war seitdem wie eine Verlorene. Der Heinrich tot. Der endliche Auszug aus dem Elendsquartier bitterer Not war zu nichts geworden. Die Kinder in Not. Und über vierzehn Tage das fünfte Kind! Körperlich und seelisch brach die Frau zusammen.

Aber das Bübchen, dem sie nach vierzehn Tagen das Leben schenkte, war ein gesundes Kind, dem nichts fehlte und das nichts zu wnig hatte. Sie schaute es nicht an. Doch als Frau Wielertz ihr das gebündelte Häuflein Leben zeigen wollte, wandte sie den Kopf zur Seite und brannte ihre wilden Tränen in die Kissen hinein. Bekümmert und erschüttert legte die gute Wielertz das Verwaiste in sein dürftibes Bettkörbchen. Es war in diesen neun Tagen nicht anders geworden. Frau Lisabeth nahm das Kind an ihre Brust, aber sie schaute über das flaumige Köpfchen hinweg, als grübele sie vergangenen Zeiten nach. Wortlos liess sie es dann zu, wenn Frau Wielertz das Kind wieder an sich nahm, es wusch und wickelte und zurechtlegte. Das war nun zu Ende. Frau Wielertz stand unschlüssig vor dem Bett der Frau und suchte nach Worten. Die Wöchnerin hatte das Gesicht abgewandt, als habe sie die Anwesenheit der Helferin vergessen.

Frau Wielertz machte einen gewaltigen Ansatz und stiess hervor: "Tja, Frau Heimling, nun war es das Letzte —"

Lisabeth Heimling drehte widerwillig den Kopf in den Kissen und schaute nach Frau Wielertz.

"Die neun Tage Pflegepflicht sind um und nun müssen Sie selbst das Kindchen besorgen — —"

"Nein — — nein — — nein — —!" Plötzlich kam Leben in den apathischen Körper. "Sie kommen doch noch 'mal? Morgen! Uebermorgen!"

"Ich hab' viel Arbeit und ich bin 'ne alte Frau. Da geht es nicht mehr so. Ich komm' schon noch 'mal nach Euch sehen, aber nicht jeden Tag!"

Lisabeth Heimling, die sich aufgerichtet hatte, fiel matt ni die Kissen zurück.

"Dann bin ich ja allein — allein — —!"

"Die Kinder sind doch da. Vier Kinder; das ist eine nette Bürde Arbeit! Und nun das fünfte — — —. Die Aufgabe wird Sie ablenken, Frau Heimling!"

Der Blick der Augen, die in tiefen Höhlen lagen, schillerte böse.

"Sie meinen wohl, damit könnte ich meinen Heinrich vergessen — —?"

"Nu, nu, nicht vergessen! Aber die Arbeit mildert den Schmerz!"

Lisabeth setzte sich wiederum aufrecht im Bett und es war erschreckend, wie dünn und hinfällig sie geworden war.

"Dass mein Heinrich tot ist, das mildert nichts! Nichts! Nichts! Was sind dagegen die Kinder? Sie wären besser tot. Jetzt gibt es doch



nur H u n g e r für sie!"

Frau Wielertz hielt die Hand der Frau fest, die sich ins Bettzeug krallte.

"Versündigt Euch nicht! Gott hat Euch gesunde, kräftige und gute Kinder gegeben. Ihr müsst versuchen, durchzukommen und für die Kinder zu arbeiten!"

"Arbeiten?" Ein grelles, krankes Lachen. "Was gibt es hier für mich zu arbeiten? Was ich konnte, nützt mir hier nicht viel. In der Stadt brauchen sie keinen, der Vieh besorgt, Ställe fegt und mit aufs Feld gehen kann — —!"

Frau Wielertz zeigte sich ein Lichtblick an einem düsteren Himmel.

"Ihr seid also vom Land? Nun, warum wollt Ihr nicht dahin zurück?"

"Was soll ich auf dem Lande tun? Da ist kein Platz für eine Frau mit fünf Kindern — — — e i n e Arbeitskraft und sechs Mäuler — — nein, nein — —!"

Die alte Wielertz richtete sich plötzlich ganz steil aufrecht. Ein Gedanke schien ihr zu kommen, dessen Ungeheuerlichkeit sie selbst erregte.

"Frau Heimling — hören Sie 'mal — würden Sie das Kind nicht abgeben?"

Lisabeth Heimling starrte die Fragende an, als verstände sie den Sinn des Gefragten nicht.

"Abgeben?" Ihr Mund formte die Worte nach, jeden einzelnen Vokal. "Abgeben? Was meint Ihr denn damit?"

Frau Wielertz strich leise über die blasse Krankenhand und wiederholte deutlicher: "Wollen Sie nicht das Kleine abgeben? In gute Hände. Zum Adoptieren. Ich wüsste da eine Dame, ach, was für feine, vornehme Leute! — 'Frau Wielertz,' sagte die zu mir, mehr als einmal, 'wenn Sie 'mal etwas hören, dass eine ordentliche, arme Familie ein Kind abgeben will — ich lasse es mir ein kleines Vermögen kosten' — — —!"

In die verständnislos starrenden Augen der Frau kam Erkenntnis. Sie riss ihre Hand unter der streichelnden der Frau Wielertz hervor und schrie keuchend: "Ich verkauf' kein Kind! Ich geb' kein Kind ab! Es ist meins! Meins! Und dem Heinrich seins!"

Der Stein war einmal ins Rollen gekommen. Frau Wielertz hatte den nötigen Mut gefunden, das Thema zu berühren; nun liess sie sich so leicht nicht mehr davon abbringen.

"Frau Heimling, überlegen Sie's einmal: neun Tage ist das Kind alt. Noch haben Sie sich nicht an den Besitz gewöhnt. Es ist Ihnen in Ihrer jetzigen Lage eine Last, jawohl, eine Last. Und dann haben Sie noch vier vesunde, schöne, grade Kinderchen, zwei Jungen, zwei Mädchen. Und da gibt es irgendwo eine Frau, die hat keines, wünscht es sich und erfleht es, bittet darum und will es erzwingen. Sie hat keins. Eine feine Frau! Eine reiche Frau! Denkt mal, was der kleine Hermann da ein Leben bekäm' — —! So 'was könntet Ihr dem Kind niemals bieten. Vielleicht wird er einmal ein reicher Herr und hilft später euch allen aus der Not!"

Lisabeth wühlte den Kopf in die Kissen, um die Stimme nicht zu hören. Aber sie hörte sie doch. Die Stimme lockte, schmeichelte und versprach. Der Junge würde ein feiner Herr — — würde mehr, als sie gewesen waren. Wie hatte Heinrich immer gesagt? "Wenn der liebe Gott mir nur jetzt die Kraft gibt, ordentlich 'was zu verdienen, damit es euch 'mal besser geht als bisher!" — Ach, die Kinder sollen doch mal 'was w e r d e n! Nein, sie will die Stimme nicht hören, nicht mehr wissen, was Heinrich gesagt, zwei Wochen vor seinem Unglück. Heinrich hatte etwas anderes gemeint: das Fortkommen der Kinder durch seine, des Vaters Kraft. Nicht so! Nicht so! Und doch! Die Kraft des Vaters fehlte. Ihr blieb nichts als ein siecher, geschwächter Leib und ein Paar kraftloser, unvermögender Hände. Und die Kinder würden hungern — — —.

"Vielleicht kauft die Dame Euch einen kleinen Hof auf dem Lande," lockte die Stimme, die durch die Kissen und Decken drang, "auf dem Lande, wo Ihr wollt. Dort wohnt Ihr mit den Kindern, haltet Hühner, ein Schwein, eine Ziege. Ihr versteht das ja alles. Die Kinder kriegen rote Backen, haben Freiheit, Luft und Sonne und satt zu essen. Und dem Hermännchen geht es so gut, wie es ihm bei Euch niemals gehen würde — —"

"Still!" keucht die Lisabeth. "Schweigt doch still! Mein Kind?"

"Stellt Euch doch nicht so an!" zürnt Frau Wielertz. "Neun Tage habt Ihr das Kleine nicht angesehen und nicht beachtet, und nun tut Ihr, als fordere einer Euer Leben — — —"

"Ich bin seine Mutter!" antwortet Lisabeth, und die Tränen rinnen über ihr blasses esicht.

"W e i l Ihr seine Mutter seid, müsst Ihr sein Bestes wollen, müsst Ihr ihm zum Glück verhelfen, wenn Ihr könnt. Und Ihr könnt es. Mit dem einen Kind rettet Ihr deren piere — — —"

Statt aller Antwort bittet Lisabeth, und ihre Stimme klingt seltsam ruhig und sanft: "Wo ist das Kindchen? Gebt es mir mal, Frau Wielertz!"

Widerwillig und zögernd, aber bezwungen von dem eigenen Willen, der aus den sanften Worten spricht, erhebt sich die Wielertz und hebt den Säugling aus den Kissen. Frau Lisabeth streckt die Hände nach ihm und hält ihn dann zum ersten Male richtig an ihrem Herzen, so, dass sie davon weiss und es spürt. Das Herz klopft ihr so, dass sie meint, es müsse den winzigen Schläfer wecken. Unentwegt schaut sie darauf nieder. Ihre Finger fahren über die verschlissenen, graugewaschenen Windeln. Sie scheint nachzudenken, ernsthaft und grüblerisch, aber der Ausdruck ihres Gesichtes gefällt der alten Wielertz nicht.

Lisabeth Heimling schaut plötzlich ganz ruhig auf und fragt: "Wie heisst die Frau, die ein Kind haben will?"

Auf diese Frage war Frau Wielertz nicht vorbereitet, diese Frage überrrumpelt sie förmlich.

"Die Frau — — die Frau — — von dem reichen Fabrikanten Starnheim, eine schöne, feine, liebe Frau — — wohltätig und edel — —. Eine bessere Mutter könnte das Hermännchen gar nicht bekommen — — —"

"Starnheim?" fragt die Frau in den Kissen. Und noch einmal ungläubig: "Starnheim? Also die Gertrud von Moellen — — —"

"Den Mädchennamen kenn' ich nicht," erwidert Frau Wielertz unsicher. "Kennen Sie denn die Frau Starnheim?"

"Ob ich sie kenne?" sagt die Lisabeth ganz hell. "Ob ich die Gertrud von Moellens Burggut kenne? Wir sind zusammen in die Dorfschule gegangen. Später freilich kam Gertrud in die städtische Schule und noch später ins Ausland in ein Pensionat. Wie sie mit Starnheim Hochzeit hielt, das weiss ich noch gut. Das ganze Dorf feierte mit. Es war eine grossartige Hochzeit. Später hörte ich nicht viel mehr von der Gertrud, hab' sie auch vergessen über Ehe, Kinder und so allem, was so gekommen ist — —. Also die Gertrud von Moellen und mein Hermännchen —" sie blickt wieder auf das Kind herab, und die Tränen rinnen von neuem aus ihren Augen.

"Ach, so feine Leute — — — solche Lebensaussichten für das Kind — —" klagt die Wielertz und heult ein bisschen mit, so gerührt ist sie.

"Wenn sie mal hierherkommen will — — —" stöhnt Lisabeth Heimling in sich hinein.

Die vier Geschwister haben fiel mehr aus dem Brüderchen gemacht, als der Mutter lieb ist. Sie haben es gestreichelt und geherzt, es geschaukelt und gefahren. Endlich — da es ja auch schlafen muss — haben sie es in Ruhe gelassen und sind auf die Strasse getollt. Frau Lisabeth hat sich zum erstenmal erhoben. Bleich und unsäglich matt sitzt sie auf der Bettkante und kann sich nicht entschliessen, irgend etwas zu tun. So sitzt sie noch, als es an die Tür pocht. Ihr Herz rast. Zitternd ruft sie: "Herein!" Und sieht dann der Frau entgegen, die allein und zögernd über die Schwelle tritt. Mit einem einzigen Blick umfasst sie die zierliche, liebreizende Gestalt, und im Nu empfindet sie von neuem die grenzenlose Zuneigung, die sie schon als Kind für die liebenswürdige Gertrud von Moellen gehegt. Ihre Augen füllen sich mit brennenden Tränen. Matt hebt sie die Hände.

Die fremde Frau auf der Schwelle zögert einen Augenblick. Mit mühsam verhaltenem Entsetzen betrachtet sie die zusammengefallene Gestalt, blickt in das Gesicht und entdeckt jäh bekannte Züge.

"Lisabeth — — —!"

Der Ruf aus Kinderzeit löst den letzten Rest von Fremdheit in Lisabeths Seele.

"Gertrud!" ruft sie, taumelt hoch und sinkt plötzlich kraftlos in sich zusammen.

Aber Gertrud Starnheim ist zur Stelle. Mit einer Kraft, die man dem zierlichen Frauenwesen nicht zugetraut haben würde, greift sie der Kraftlosen unter die Arme und bringt sie wieder an ihren Platz. Mit bleichem Lächeln um den Mund dankt ihr Lisabeth Heimling. Dann sitzen sie lange und unterhalten sich über Dinge aus der gemeinsam verlebten Kinderzeit, berühren kein anderes Thema und fühlen sich glücklich dabei. Da fängt das Kind zu schreien an; es ist die Stunde seiner Mahlzeit.

Die beiden Frauen sehen sich an, und jäh ist ein Fremdes zwischen sie getreten. In beider Blick loht die Angst, flammen Begehren und Abwehr.

Dann sagt Gertrud Starnheim: "Soll ich es dir geben?"

"Nein — — ich kann — —" stammelt Lisabeth und macht ein-, zweimal den Versuch, aufzustehen. Es geht nicht. Totenfahl sinkt sie immer wieder zurück.

"Du kannst n i c h t!" bestimmt Gertrud, und diese Worte sind fast symbolhaft. Ist Lisabeth nicht wirklich unvermögend, auch nur eine Hand für ihre Kinder zu regen? Und Gertrud Starnheim geht mit festen, schnellen Schritten zum Körbchen und nimmt das Kind heraus.

Lisabeths Augen folgten ihr. Eine wilde Eifersucht schlägt aus diesem Blick. Jene dort fasst das Kind mit kundiger Hand an. Sie hält es, als wäre sie es gewöhnt, mit Kindern umzugehen. Sie benimmt sich nicht linkisch und ängstlich wie eine Kinderlose.

Gertrud Starnheim hält das Kind eine Weile in ihrem Arm. Sie schaut in das kleine Gesicht, auf den roten, zum Schreien verzogenen Mund, auf die Fäustchen, die eine kleine, eigenwillige Bewegung machen. Und eine plötzliche, heisse Liebe zu diesem Geschöpfchen pulst durch sie hin und hält sie so ganz gefangen, dass sie wie im Schwindel die Augen schliesst. Lisabeth sieht die innige Bewegung, mit der Gertrud das Kind ein wenig, ein ganz klein wenig an sich drückt. Dünkt sie sich schon Besitzerin des Kindes? Dann frohlockt sie zu früh. Lisabeth wird das Kind nicht abgeben, sie kann nicht.

Da wendet sich Gertrud schon, reicht ihr ohne Zögern das Gebündelte und sieht zu, wie Lisabeth es mit fast hastigen Bewegungen entgegennimmt.

"Siehst du, Lisabeth," sagt sie mit leiser Stimme, und ihr schönes Gesicht strahlt einen heiligen Ernst aus, "so etwas habe ich mir lange gewünscht. Es sollte ein Kind achtbarer Familie sein. Die unehelichen Kinder machten mir immer Angst. Meist weiss man nicht, welche verborgenen Keime später in so einem Kinde zum Ausbruch kommen. Ihr ward beide gesund, dein Mann und du! Ihr seid ein anständiger Menschenschlag. Euer Kind kann man beruhigt annehmen."

Lisabeth sagt kein Wort. Sie sitzt ganz ruhig. Sie sieht zu, wie Gertrud ein Papier aus der Tasche zieht und es ihr hinhält. Es ist ein Formular, in dem sie ausdrücken soll, dass sie auf das Kind verzichtet; sie braucht nur die Unterschrift zu geben.

"Wo willst du den Hof haben? In der Heimat — —?"

"Nicht in der Heimat!" stösst Lisabeth hervor.

"Du darfst dich nicht aufregen!" befiehlt Gertrud mit fester Stimme. "Das schadet dem Kinde. Du sollst mal sehen, was daraus wird! Wie ich das erziehen werde! Ich werde alles tun: dem Kinde soll nichts fehlen. Will es Gott, so soll etwas Rechtes aus ihm werden."

Werden? Da ist das Wort wieder. Heinrich strebte danach, dass die Kinder einmal etwas werden sollten. Müsste er nicht zufrieden damit sein, dass sie in Selbstentäusserung um dieses jüngsten Kindes willen dessen Wege ebnete? Werden! Gertrud hatte Stellung und Mittel, ihrem Kinde ein herrliches Leben zu bereiten.

Das Kind ist satt und über dem Trinken wieder eingeschlafen. Wieder strecken sich Gertrud Starnheims Arme aus, nehmen das Kind, halten es ans Herz gepresst. Lisabeth sieht, wie die Augen der anderen auf dem zarten Kindergesichtchen ruhen, so, als hätte sie es jetzt schon lieb. Wie kann eine andere ein fremdes Kind liebhaben? Wie viel Sehnsuch nach Mutterglück vermag diesen Ernst, diese Weihe, diese Heiligkeit zu schaffen! Arme Gertrud von Moellen: so reich, so glücklich, so beneidenswert, und doch ganz arm, ohne Kind und Erbe!

Aber mein Kind soll es nicht sein! Lisabeth stöhnt innerlich und kann doch den Blick nicht von Gertrud wenden. Die ausgeprägte Sehnsucht in jeder Bewegung der andern hält sie wie mit magischen Ketten. Darf sie denn so selbstsüchtig sein? Darf sie das Kind, dem eine glänzende Zukunft winkt, aus Eigennutz zurückhalten? Sie gibt es doch in gute Hände. Sie gibt es doch nicht irgendwelchen: sie gibt es Gertrud, der bewunderten Kindergespielin.

(Fortsetzung folgt.)

———o———

Zwei kinder suchen eine neue Mutter

Von Carl Tinhofer

DIE kleine Maria hatte trotz aller Ermahnungen wieder einmal einen frischgewichsten Schuh abgeschleckt. Weil sie überhaupt an Lederzeug und Wichsleinwand einen kuriosen Geschmack fand, wusste sich die Mutter keinen anderen Rat mehr; sie sprach die Verbannung aus. — "Marsch!" sagte sie — "marschier dich! — Ich mag dich jetzt gar nimmer!" Gleichzeitig legte sie schon den Schürhacken aus der Hand, um dem bittenden Kinde sofortt unters Kinn greifen zu können.

Doch siehe da! Die Kleine bat ganz und gar nicht. Sie spitzte das Mäulchen und sagte ernsthaft: "Ich teh mir eine neuche Mutter suchen!"

Frau Maria spreizte die Augen auf. So was machte sie rein baff.

"Ja!" bekräftigte die Kleine und nickte in drolliger Entschlossenheit.

Beim Anblick von so viel süsser Dummheit wäre die Mutter am liebsten in die Knie gesunken. Es rührte sie fast zu Tränen. — Allein, sie bewahrte sich davor. — "Gut!" sagte sie schmollend, "du kannst schon gehen. Such dir nur eine neuche Mutter. Ach, ich bin gerade froh dabei!" Ja, so sagte sie.

Hedwig hatte bisher teilnahmslos in einem Haufen alter Flecke gespielt. Jetzt stand sie auf einmal auf, strampelte sich hervor und fing mit einem Male grässlich zu heulen an. Darüber erstaunte die Mutter. Was denn sei, fragte sie.

"Ja," stammelte Hedwig zwischen den Fingern hervor, "wenn das Mariedl gehen muss, dann geeh ich auch mit!"

Vor Ueberraschung schoss der Frau die Wärme in die Augen. Sie musste sich zwingen, um nicht alle beide in die Arme zu reissen. Ihr mütterliches Herz begehrte gar heiss auf. Es wollte aus solch getreuem Liebesbunde nicht ausgeschlossen sein, und ein Weilchen gelang es ihr gar nicht, etwas zu reden. Dann aber erklärte sie sich auch mit dieser zweiten Aufkündigung einverstanden. Sie richtete ein Paar kleine Binkel, tat jeweils einen Apfel hinein, ein Stücklein Brot, und reichte es mit vorsichtig abgewandtem Gesichte den Kindern.

"Pfüat Euch Gott, Mutter!" piepsten die beiden und wackelten todestraurig beim Gartentürl hinaus. Wackelten der Treffling entlang aus dem Dorf. Der Binkel klopfte beharrlich und stet an ihre Beinchen. Unablässig schnupften sie das Tränenwasser durch die Nase auf, — sie waren wirklich sehr gekränkt und traurig.

O, wenn sie gewusst hätten! Noch leuchteten ihre bunten Kittel zwischen dem Gestäude des Zauns, da packte die Mutter schon Unruhe und Sorge. Welche Trotzköpfe! Flink band sie eine frische Schürze um und folgte ihnen fürsorglich nach.

Mit stockenden Füsslein wandelten die zwei Auswanderer auf der Landstrasse dahin. Als sie der Binderin begegneten, schrien sie beide so überlaut guten Morgen, dass sie ihre Spritzkrüge zu Boden stellte und sich nach Ziel und Ursach der Reise erkundigte. Die Kleinen schwiegen. Sie bekamen plötzlich die Eigenschaft der armen Leute: sie schämten sich ihrer Heimatlosigkeit. Sie schupsten auf jede Frage albern die Achseln und trappelten wieder davon.

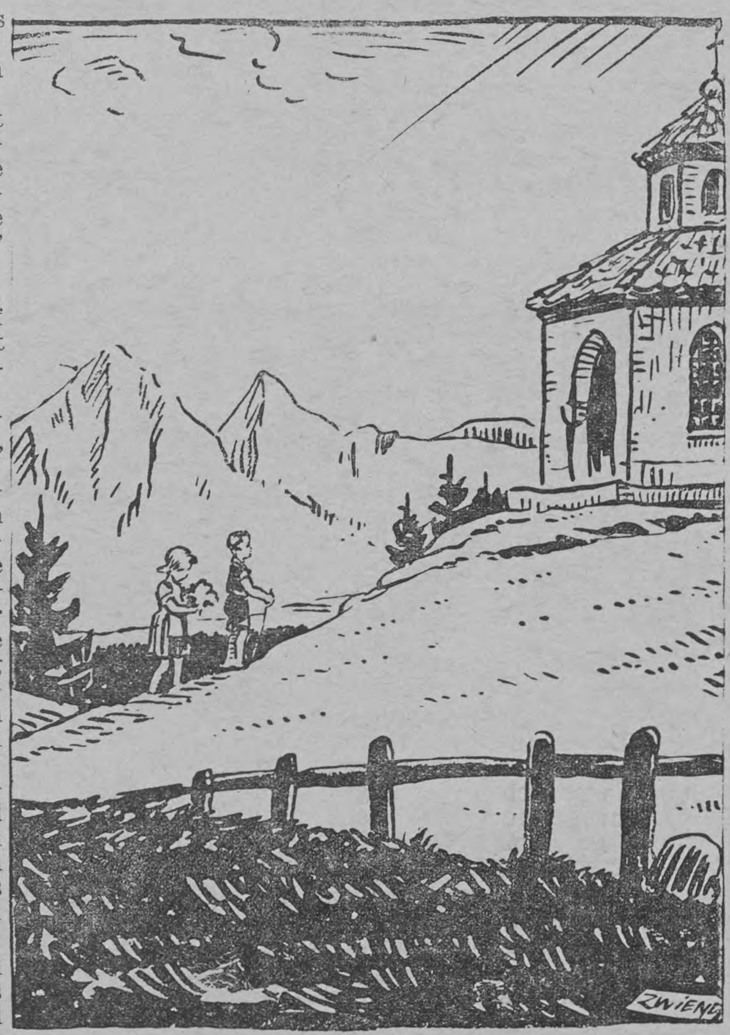
Am Petererbergl setzten sie sich auf die Steinstufen der Pestsäule und hielten Rat.

"Wo gehen wir denn jetzt hin?" fragte Hedwig mutlos und nestelte den roten Apfel aus dem Binkel.

Die Kleine kroch um den Sockel herum. Sie tröstete sich leichter.

"Jetzt müssen wir sterben," weissagte Hedwig trostlos. Sie biss in den Apfel hinein, dass ihr der Saft übers Kinn lief.

Auch das griff die Kleine noch nicht an. Sie stellte sich hoch auf die Zehen, dass der bunte Unterkittel sichtbar wurde, und steckte die Nase mühsam über das Fussstück der Säule. Da oben lief nämlich ein Käfer.



Gang zur Mutter-Gottes-Kapelle — Bruno Zwiener.

"Wegen deiner!" schalt Hedwig vorwurfsvoll.

Der Tag, ein bisschen trübe, gab ein mildes Dämmerlicht. Der eiserne rostige Ring um das Haupt der Jungfrau auf der Säule sang gedämpft im Winde. Und unten lag das stille Dorf. Rot und zackig wie Feuergarben schossen im Steinauergarten die Bohnenstauden zwischen den ausgewachsenen Krautköpfen empor. Beim Kernbäcker russte der Kamin. Ein weisslich-blauer Nebel verbarg die Ferne und legte sich eng und bang auf das Gemüt. Feuchtigkeit glänzte auf den Bäumen. Manchmal fiel ein Tropfen aus dem

Laub in den Strassenstaub, der sich krümmelte wie Mehlsterz.

Ueber eine Weile hub Hedwig von neuem an. Sie war melancholisch geworden. "Was werden sie denn jetzt daheim tun?" begann sie zu raten.

"Heut macht die Mutter Swetschtenknödel," plapperte Maria.

Hedwig seufzte tief und steckte die Hände tief unter die Schürze. Heimweh füllte ihr Herz.

"Tehn wir heim!" schlug die Kleine mürbe vor. Ueberdies schien es ihr bereits schrecklich lange, dass sie nicht mehr daheim gewesen.

"Die Mutter mag uns ja nimmer! Sie hat gesagt, wir dürfen gar nimmer heimkommen." Hedwig sagte es mit der Miene einer erfahrenen Leidträgerin. Sie nickte fortwährend schmerzklug vor sich hin und wiederholte zur eigenen Pein: "Gar nie mehr dürfen wir heim, gar nimmer."

Nein, so schlimm sah Maria die Geschichte denn doch nicht. Sie besass mehr das frohsinnige Gemüt der Mutter. Alsdann schränkte sie ein: "Aber auf die Nacht dürfen wir schon heimtehen."

"Nein, auch nicht!" Hedwig war schier zornig über diese alberne Hoffnung.

"Wann denn?"

"Gar nie mehr!"

Da erfasste endlich die Kleine auch ihr Unglück. Sie legte gleich den halbgegessenen Apfel beiseite und begann herzzerbrechend zu weinen. Sie sass da und rieb die Fäuste in die Augen und weinte mit ihrer gesunden Stimme, dass es ein Jammer war, anzuhören.

"Flenn nicht," tröstete Hedwig und setzte denn auch bald hinzu: "Wir müssen wallfahren gehen!"

"Ja!" stammelte die Kleine gehorsam.

"Auf den Sonntagberg!"

Nämlich dieser war fünf Gehstunden entfernt. Nachdem sie ihn jedoch heute vor lauter Nebel gar nirgends sehen konnte, schien ihr die Wallfahrt doch nicht recht müglich. Darauf zog sie der Schwester vorwurfsvoll die Schürze vom Gesicht.

Endlich hatten sich die Kinder soweit zurecht geweint, dass sie wieder weiter beraten konnten. Nachdem die Wallfahrt nicht möglich, blieb gar nichts anderes übrig, als sich gleich auf der Stelle an die liebe Himmelsmutter zu wenden. Augenblicklich knieten sich die Mädchen auf den Stein und fingen zu beten an. — Es ist fragwürdig, ob die süsse Jungfrau in Pestzeiten einmal inniger und vertrauender ward um Hilfe angerufen worden. So wundergläubig sangen sich die feinen Stimmlein zur Madonna empor, dass es fast ein Wunder war, wenn der Stein nicht lebendig wurde.

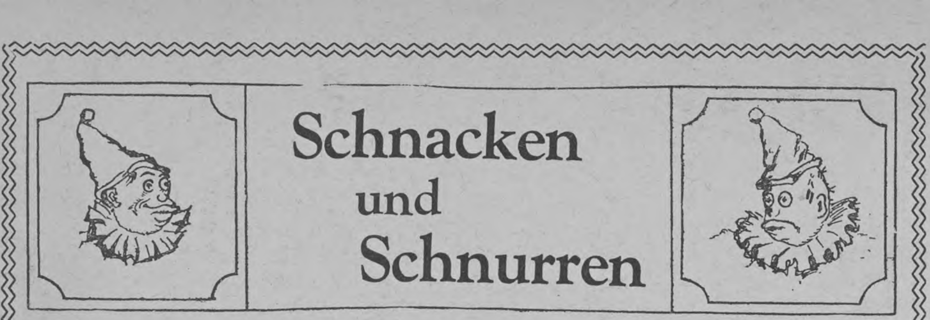
Die Mutter hinter der Säule weinte nun doch ein Gesätzel. Sie fasste nach dem Schürzenzipfel und achtete es gar nicht, dass der Kittel hinten ums Eck stund. —

Richtig!

Dem Mariedl blieb mitten unterm Absterbens-Amen der Mund offen. Hedwig folgte dem Blick der Schwester und sah ebenfalls den Kittel. Sie standen beide auf; die eine ging links, die andere rechts; Hedwig blieb auf der unteren Staffel, Maria erkletterte die obere — alle zwei aber schrien sie plötzlich, wie aus einem Munde, ein jauchzendes, erkennendes: "Mutter!" — — —

Fürderhin hat Frau Maria aus verstehbaren Gründen keine Verbannung mehr ausgesprochen . . . .







Ein geflickter Strumpf.

Ja, glaubt es, meine Frau die
stickt,
Und Grete stickt,
Und Anna stickt;
Und Else und Babette,
Die sticken um die Wette;
Selbst Lenchen, sonst so lieb
und gut,
Die stickt mit einer wahren
Wut.
Die Mutter samt den Töchtern
stickt;
Und keine näht, und keine
strickt.
Ich hab' sechs Paar gestickte
Schuh',
Und keinen ganzen Strumpf
dazu!

So klagt ein Hausvater in launiger Art darüber, dass Frau und Töchter ihre Zeit mit allerlei wenig nützlicher Arbeit vertrödeln und darüber das Notwendige versäumen.

* * *

Umsonst.

Hotelier: "Was, der Herr will nicht glauben, dass das Hasenbraten ist? Haben Sie ihm das denn nicht plausibel gemacht?"

Kellner: "Und wie, aber es war alles für die Katz!"

* * *

Kindliche Auffassung.

"Wir trinken daheim keine Milch. Papa sagt, sie wäre alle verfälscht."

"Unsere kann gar nicht verfälscht sein, wir kriegen sie von plombierten Kühen."

* * *

Hausierer: "Haben Sie vielleicht leere Flaschen zu verkaufen?"

Hausfrau: "Tut mir leid. In der Küche stehen zwar Weinflaschen, aber die sind noch halb voll."

Hausierer: "Na, so ganz leer brauchen sie ja nicht zu sein."

* * *

Grossmutter kommt nicht in die Hölle.

Eine ehrwürdige Grossmutter erzählte ihrem Enkel recht oft von der Hölle, worin die bösen Menschen kämen und dort sei ewig Heulen und Zähneklappern.

Da sprach der Kleine: "Grossmutter, nicht wahr? Du kommst aber nicht in die Hölle?"

"Warum denn nicht?"

"Du hast ja keine Zähne mehr und kanst drum auch nicht klappern."

* * *

Gut gegeben.

Eine Dame stieg vor dem Schauspielhause aus einem Auto. Sie trug ein langes Schleppkleid, das den Boden berührte. Ein Herr, der eilig vorüberging, trat unglücklicherweise auf die Schleppe. Empört drehte sich die Dame um und sprach:

"Konnten Sie nicht aufpassen Sie Ochse?"

"Pardon, Gnädigste, ich wusste nicht, dass Kühe so einen langen Schwanz haben!"

* * *

Voltaire, der für die Frauen stest ein boshaftes Wort zur Hand hatte, wurde eines Tages gefratg, ob er auch dafür sei, dass ein Mädchen mehrere Sprachen lerne. "Ja nicht," lautete die Antwort des geistreichen Franzosen, "eine Zunge ist für eine Frau genug!"

Weisst du schon?

— dass in DEUTSCHLAND alle jüdischen Rechtsanwälte abgesetzt wurden?

* * *

— dass Kardinal INNITZER am Tag nach dem Palaststurm im blossen Talar die Messe lesen ging — Hut, Mantel, Ring, Bischofskreuz usw. waren ihm gestohlen worden?!

* * *

— dass in der SLOWAKEI die Kommunistenpartei aufgehoben und die kommunistische Presse verboten wird? Die tschechische Regierung wird diesem Beispiel folgen.

* * *

— dass die ITALIENISCHEN Verluste in SPANIEN seit Ausbruch des Krieges 12,147 Mann betragen, davon an Toten 227 Offiziere und 2,708 Mann, an Verwundeten 697 Offiziere und 8,161 Mann, an Gefangenen 3 Offiziere und 351 Mann?

HEIMWEH

Von Nikolaus Lenau.

Es ist worden kühl und spät,
Nebel auf der Wiese weidet,
Durch die öden Haine weht
Heimweh; — alles flieht und
scheidet.

Herz, du hast dir selber oft
Wehgetan und hast es andern,
Weil du hast geliebt, gehofft;
Nun ist's aus, wir müssen
wandern!

Auf die Reise will ich fest
Ein dich schliessen und verwahren,
Draussen mag ein linder West
Oder Sturm vorüberfahren;

Dass wir unsern letzten Gang
Schweigsam wandeln und alleine,
Dass auf unsern Grabeshang
Niemand als der Regen weine!

The Rambler......

The Shot in Paris.

The shot that killed the German in Paris was heard around the world. It was fired by a Jew. Uprisals came immediately, and many innocent Jews suffered; others were exiled. The Press, Radio and all modern means of propaganda joined in condemning persecution.

We too must fight against injustice and persecution. We too must condemn persecution. We too must condemn persecution of the innocent Jews.

At the same time we ask: Why then not condemn persecution when it is directed against Christians?

What did the world say against Stalin when he liquidated 17 million Christians? What did the radio and press say when hundred of thousands of Christians were put to death in Mexico simply because they were Catholics? When the Reds in Spain slaughtered 14,000 priests and Nuns? Did we hear any protest? Why?

* * *

Where Is Gold?

Gold is supposed to be our unit of exchange, between producer and consumer, shouldn't it? It should circulate freely, and yet, since the World War began in 1914, gold circulates only between the Masters of finance. Your paper Dollar is supposed to be backed by gold. If you went to the bank with your paper dollar, do you think you would be able to get the gold for it?

Soon the world will see that the Gold Standard will have to be done away with, altogether.

The International banker is now making plans to do away with the gold standard. He will create a kind of "super-money" which will be that of the International Bank. The plan is called "Nationalization". When that happens the workers of the world will be strangled. The poor will be completely at the mercy of the International banker.

* * *

So Franco kills women and children!

To believe our newspapers we should think that Franco kills none but women and children. He just doesn't seem to be able to hit anyone else. Recently he was accused of a terrible "slaughter" by an air raid on Barcelona. And what happened really? There was an explosion in a munition factory. Of course, the Loyalists swear there was no such thing. But travellers saw it and brought the "news" to France.

* * *

1 Per Cent Oppresses the 99 Per Cent.

In Russia there is only one party: The Communist Party. Only two million Russians belong to the Communist Party. But this body of two million oppresses and enslaves the other 173 million.

Less than 1 per cent rules the country. And Stalin is "boss" of that 1 per cent.

* * *

Indifferent Catholics are more dangerous than persecutors.

"I am not afraid of the Atheist, the revolutionary or the persecutor, but I am afraid of the apathetic and indifferent people in the Church itself . . . . the Church has the truth to deliver and the machinery to make it known. All we ask is that me n and women shall go out into the world and deliver the message."

Msgr. Marshall.

* * *

10 Million Dozen Oranges.

Ragpicked Bill Jackson stood before a pile of oranges 15 feet high, and 1¼ mile long. "There must be about 10 million dozen oranges in this dump by now," he said. "They've been dumping every day for the last three months — 20 big six-ton trucks a day. Oranges are better than last year, but there's a lot more dumping. Can't figure it out.'"

Another fellow commented: "How could oranges be so high? Why they're dumping them into the river and spraying crankcase oil over them so that nobody can use them. Prices shouldn't be high. People just haven't anything to use for money, that's all." The fellow continued talking. He claimed he'd seen the oranges, a whole mile long, rotting in the sun. He said he'd smelled them and they didn't smell any worse than the money system that allowed such a thing. Kids of poor families were growing up with rickets because they couldn't get oranges, while a pile of oranges, over a mile long, were rotting in the sun, at Anaheim, California.

As far as the eye could see there were oranges dumped on the west side of that Santa Ana River. The packing house people paid a man $75.00 a month to spray the oranges with oil at night, to keep people who wanted oranges from taking any of them away. All around there were "No Trespassing" signs. Nobody was allowed to come near to take any of these oranges away.

The only real riches in the world are the things we need to live, the things like fruit, vegetables, corn and wheat which mother earth produces in plenty. God gives us even more than we need to live. Why can't those riches get into the hands of the people who need them?

The trouble is that man is muzzling in, in the plan of God, and thereby keeping those riches from getting into the hands of those that need them to live.

* * *

On Revolution:—

"The choice is clear: Either the world will have a Revolution of Violence or a Revolution of Love. The Revolution of Love cannot just be preached, it must be lived by souls enkindled as the burning heart of Christ."
Fulton J. Sheen.

Its Fun to be a Priest - - Sometimes

C. Kinderwater, O.M.I.

MIRACLES, — was it, you asked for? Don't! — Not that sort of thing. — They weigh too heavily upon the reputation of the one who seems responsible. But instances that God in Heaven isn't standing idly by, in that other world of His, — Ah yes! — that happens. Instances like that occur, — and often too, altho' it never seems so clear, once you have set it down in writing. — Time's a razor, that shaves the "startle" off the past events!

No matter! — There are often times, when you can almost feel the guiding hand of Someone higher, thrust down into events that often threaten to become formidable. — And then you have to pray, because you know right well there's Someone to be thanked.

I remember once. It happened on a trip I took.

Perhaps I wouldn't have been specially impressed by my "good-luck' just then, but I caught my fellow travellers praying, — and all spontaneously! They were little Indian kids, — and Indian children aren't any more likely to start in praying by themselves than the cross-cut of our Whites. But there they were,—saying the rosary by themselves, — not fearfully at all, but with the calm conviction that they could stop a leaden sky from "pouring".

They looked a little shame-faced, when I "run in" on them, —but then, a little later, when I saw the Heavens clear, it struck me very forcibly that others than myself must have listened to that prayer, — that perhaps our guardian angels up above were just a little busier than usual, — that Providence was acting!

And that was just the start!

But here I am, already half-way thru my story, without a single word about the way it started.

It was a morning, very early in July. The Principal of one of our Indian schools asked me if I'd accompany some of his charges back to their homes, a little more than a 100 miles away. The road was, almost all of it, along the highway, so I accepted with alacrity.

That day had dawned right sullenly, — but after one short drizzle promised to be fair, so, after dinner, we loaded up the Mission-truck, and started off. Eleven heads all told, — and all but one, were black! We hoped to have the nine children, seven boys and two girls, delivered to their homes before the fall of night. But we had not counted on the fickleness, or rather shall we say, the viciousness of the weather.

At any rate, it semed the rain had just been holding back to entice us to get irrevocably under way. Then it started pounding down on us, — or rather on the tarpaulin tent, which we set up in the truck box.

Supper-time overtook us a meager 50 miles from Grouard. I'm not surprised! — We had to go so very slowly. — No matter! We stopped at the priest's house, a little out of town. I sent the kids into a buggy-shed, and went myself upstairs, above the church into the living quarters, to see about a little supper. There was that in plenty, but the prospects of having to stay in those crowded quarters for the night banished effectively any gastronomical complacency.

It was when I took the coffee down to the kids, that I caught them praying. — And then the rain let up! It was too tempting not to push on farther with the blue of heaven back. Besides there was another Catholic Mission, 60 miles or so away, with sleeping room for all, in plenty.

But acting on an impulse that I didn't stop to analyse, I sent the truck back into town to get the kids a treat. I felt it was no more than right, seeing how well they had arranged things with the weather-man.

But then the truck didn't want to reappear. I went down myself, impatiently to find it—parked in a garage. What was wrong? — Oh, the bolt that held the steering gear to the right front wheel had broken thru as my half-breed driver tried to turn a corner in the town. — No, no accident! — but if we had been going the usual 35 or so on the highway, which is gravelled out of town — —? ! ?

As I stood watching those garage-men, working now at double-quick, a scene came back to me . . . It was those Indian children praying! By half-past eight the job was finished, and we were off again, upon our way.

Yes, it was cold enough by now, but our tarpaulin tent broke the wind a bit and then the kids were really "spunky". Down the hill into Peace River town, we found the dirt road to the Mission in a really wretched state. Oh, yes, ordinarily it's a very scenic drive, on a road that skirts occasionally the last lip of earth that they call the bank of the Peace, but in the dark and in the mud, there's always room for slipping. — There were still those dozen miles or so to go, the time was creeping up on eleven, — so we didn't risk the road.

We turned off at the Catholic rectory in town, to find my parents there, just ending a visit to the "Cure' remplacant", one of those good old missionaries, who saw our West when it was young, and helped to build it up, to something worth a bit. We had a time of it! — Of course, we mustn't think of going farther. We had to eat a welcome lunch, and then be sent to bed — that is, the children were. How? — Just leave a job like that to any of those old missionaries, who, one by one, are slowly taking leave of us, for better worlds, I hope. They have the habit of knowing what to do in pinches.

I'm sure that I'll remember long the sight I saw when I myself crept up to bed, a little after midnight. The seven boys, lying on a couple of mattresses in the upstairs corridor, were sprawled in all directions, but snoring peacefully, almost in harmony when they could get together.

Next morning, first Friday of the month, one of those fellows marched up boldly were I was, rather sleepily, I fear, preparing for my mass, and asked me back to the confessional box. Yep, they were a fine bunch, those boys, even though they're a bit darker than us,—outside.

After mass, a hurried breakfast, and then a little after eight o'clock, we left, — in rain again. But the highway wasn't gravelled any more for any of the forty miles we had to cover yet to get our charges home. Of course, we had to meet a "road-hog", and after he had missed us, we slid helplessly just to the edge of a larger-sized ditch. — Willows, leaves, bush, — anything to give the wheels a grip! And what affectionate mud! It simply could not be convinced that "pick-ups"



must not be taken seriously.

Twelve o'clock, — and still ten miles and more to plow! What to do for dinner? My sympathetic system informed my head very premptorily that food would be a valuable asset. But where to stop? I hardly dared to call on any of my confreres. I felt that no self-respecting priest's housekeeper would hail our coming with any other than a sham delight, and maybe a sarcastic remark that even the yard outside had been cleaned up and arranged, — "very recently, in fact".

Too bad in a way, I was not forced to find out! As we were nearing the house of one of the richest farmers of that district, a man came running to the road to herd us off into his yard. Of course, he was an old friend of the family, and had heard that I'd be going by that day, but even then, I felt very hesitant about imposing on his hospitality, my fair-sized, hungry tribe. But nothing could convince him that he should let us go on farther. We had to stop for dinner.

Be sure it was a meal! and I hope the guardian angels of my dusky charges will see he is rewarded properly. I'm sure they will though, because they know as well as I, that Indians aren't welcome at the dinner-table of all the whites, especially those whom fortune has placed in an honored niche in their own community. — Sometimes, you know, it's fun being a priest. It's when you find that there are still some Catholics left!

After dinner and a rest, we started on our final stretch, and slid into the last reserve, about 4 o'clock that afternoon. — No, we didn't stop for long. Just long enough to unload the last of our charges, and then we turned for home. But on the way, I felt that I was in the right mood to hold a fiery argument with the guardian angels of those kids, if they were still around. I'd have asked them what the use was anyway, of making the home-coming of those kids so easy and so right, when they haven't really homes to go to. But maybe, they'd have answered me that their job was a whole lot easier in the places that those kids call home, — than riding in a truck with a half-baked missionary. Perhaps they'd be right! Anyhow I know they're there, and that's a lot of difference.

An Arab folk tale relates that Pestilence once met a caravan upon the desert-way to Bagdad. "Why," asked the Arab chief, "must you hasten to Bagdad?"

"To take 5000 lives," Pestilence replied.

Upon the way back from the City of the Caliphs, Pestilence and the caravan met again. "You deceived me," the chief said angrily. "Instead of 5000 lives you took 50,000!"

"Nay," said Pestilence. "Five thousand and not one more. It was fear who killed the rest."

Lament of a Catholic Newspaper Editor.

January 30, 1939.

Mr. John Slopay,
Clareton, Wiscola.

Dear Sir:—

I hasten to acknowledge the receipt of your payment of $2.00 for a year's subscription to our paper. The money is gratefully received and will help very much to relieve a financial distress. The only regret is that this amount pays for the year before the two years previous before last year's subscription, and there are several other years due, including the one in advance. I call this to your attention, trusting you will recognize our terms of "All subscriptions payable in advance" and send $12.00 additional at your earliest convenience.

Your Editor.

* * *

Drunk With Power.

Man seeks power, yet with too much power, man becomes drunk and ruthless.

Angel Cake

......A Poignant Tale of the West......of an Old Man's Fears, and a Girl who Understood.

By J. W. Eiser.



"BAH!" The old man spat vehemently and replaced his belching briar. He glanced fiercely at the young man before him. "Why don't you sit down?" he grunted impatiently. Then he snorted in disgust: "Happy Birthday? Huh!"

Young Phil Murel, abashed and nervous, seated himself. He felt even more uncomfortable than ever. "Better watch your step, and tread lightly," he warned himself. He fished for an opening. "The crop prospects seem brighter this year," he said, and then watched Thad from the corner of his eye.

"Uncle Thad" smoked on. Everyone called him "Uncle', because of his relationship to beautiful Mary Madden. She and Phil were engaged to be married. At first, out of principle, Thad had refused to give his consent. "Let him marry my widowed sister's girl? She's much too good for any man," he had raged, shaking his head. But Mary had her way in the end, as she usually did. No one, least of all Thad, could say "no" to those quivering lips, those tear-filled eyes, and above all—when he felt those soft, white arms encircling his neck.

"We're mighty lucky to have missed the annual dust-storms!" Phil spoke again, recklessly.

Thad's pipe gurgled. "Not yet," he answered, "but they'll probably come. I've seen too much these last seven years to be very optimistic."

"But the land's good!" Phil forced the conversation. "And all it needs is rain, and quiet weather."

"S-ure!" His tone was contemptuous. "That'e all the Sahara needs too, if you come to that. Mark my words," he paused, and waved his pipe under Phil's nose. "If this country doesn't get enough rain, it'll be as barren as a desert; and fine hopes and speeches won't help it none either."

"Now, now, Uncle Thad," a girlish voice interrupted him laughingly. Appearing from nowhere, she now hugged him from behind, and kissed his cheek. "Don't you go threatening my young man that way," she chided.

Thad spluttered. "Now, see here girlie! Leave me be. We've important business to discuss."

Mary Madden paid no heed whatever. "What's like the Sahara, Phil?" she asked, seating herself beside her bilious uncle.

Phil answered. "The prairies, according to his notions."

Mary raised her eyebrows. "The prairies? The West?" She turned on her uncle in mock ferocity. "Uncle! Shame on you!"

"It's a fact, anyhow!" he muttered uneasily.

"Never!" came the firm answer. "Why, Phil and I were going to be real farmers, as soon as he's saved enough money to buy his own land. Nothing could be grander, and better." Her tone became more serious now. "What if we do have to work hard. Won't we be the freest people in the whole world? We won't have to punch any slavish old time-clock. We'll have a steady job too." She turned to Phil: "Won't we, Phil?"

He nodded. His heart was jumping crazily within him as he thought to himself. "I'll never find another like her. God! How did she ever happen to pick me, when there are others better than I?" He spoke to Thad instead. "What man couldn't succeed on the farm with her as his wife?"

Mary blushed with pleasure. Thad grunted, but did not deny it. "You're young yet, children," he sighed. "But wait until you've had seven crop-failures behind you. Then you'll sing a different tune."

"Is that any worse than being on relief?.... in the city?" Mary demanded.

Thad ground his teeth. "The world's going to the dogs," he grunted. "The land's cursed. It's barren. The whole white race is cursed too . . . and it's growing barren as well."

Mary shook his arm violently. "Where did you get these silly notions, uncle?" she asked.

"They're not silly."

"Yes, they are!"

"If you'd read the newspapers, you'd think the same as I," Thad rejoined hotly.

"The newspapers!" Her tone was infinitely contemptuous. "Those scandal sheets. All they seem to be able to discuss is murder, divorce, suicide, and . . . and . . ." words failed her.

Thad was now thoroughly aroused. "Crazy they may be, no doubt," he exclaimed, "but they give you some facts that are true. At least our Catholic papers," he amended hastily. "Don't you know," he again began waving his pipe, "that the white race is committing suicide? . . . That populations are at a standstill? And why? Because family life is rotten to the core. Why, in some American cities there are more divorces granted than there are marriages performed. How can these countries be prosperous if God does not rain his blessings upon them? And they cant be blessed if they transgress His laws. I remember enough history to know why Rome and Babylon perished. Why! those pagans of yesterday would blush alongside our moderns. Their sterility is the result of their evil lives." He paused, and then finished, "just as our land is becoming barren because of our past sins."

"But, Uncle Thad!" Mary's voice was hushed. "All people aren't bad?"

"Thank God for that," he answered. "But if things go much longer the way they are, I know what will happen."

"What will?"

"Take them modern birth controllers, for instance. They're bringing the curse of Adam into our land. It will come," his voice was dire, and prophetic, "if something isn't done about it. The

hypocrites!" he spat in disgust, "pretending to work for the benefit of the poor. Why don't they tell the rich to have more children? They can afford to educate more than one or two, that is certain. But no! They want the poor, the foreigners, the negroes . . . and even us Catholics, to die out. That's all they want to do. And our poor people fall for their hypocritical propaganda." He groaned. Mary looked at Phil, then back at her uncle. She knew his moods. It was best to leave him to himself. But she could not help saying:

"I'm sure you're mistaken, Uncle. At least we Catholics have our principles, and we are going to keep them." Thad said nothing, but puffed nervously at his pipe. Mary rose, and whispered into his ear: "You'll be over tonight, won't you?"

Thad looked up and then turned his face away. Mary rumpled his hair affectionately, and kept grimly on. "I've made a special cake for you . . . all by myself!" She saw his face brighten slightly. A dim smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. She bent low and said: "It's an Angel Cake, too." Her lips brushed his bristly beard. Hastily squeezing his arm, she darted off down the street. Both men watched her go. Then she turned and shouted back: "It's an Angel Cake, Uncle, because you're an angel too." Then she laughed.

"As clear . . . and pure as a bell," Thad murmured, and Phil saw a tiny watery film glisten in his eys. "She'll make a good wife, Phil m'lad." And then, as he reflected, his voice hardened slightly. "But you'd better treat her right, or by George, you'll have to reckon with me."

Phil stiffened. His smile faded and his voice shook as he spoke. "You know me better than that."

Thad coughed in embarrassment. "Don't mind me, son." His voice was suddenly tender. "I'm just a soft-hearted old fool, after all. I just can't help loving that gal; and you too, I reckon. If all our young people were like you two," he mused, "I'd have no fear for the future of our dear country."

Both were silent. Thad's eyes swept the landscape. He saw the children at play in the street . . . the nodding horses at the hitch-rail . . . the dancing horizon . . . the young green shoots waving gaily in the slight Spring breeze. Then he remembered his Mary . . . his own dear Mary. "And she had called him an Angel?" he whispered to himself. A huge wave of joy, and tenderness, and thankfulness swept over him. Suddenly he felt lighter.

"I guess Mary's right at that," he spoke. "We'll always have barren fig-trees, whom God will curse. But there are other plants who will always bear fruit. They will go through life doing good, obeying God's sacred laws, bringing smiles and love to others." He placed his hand on Phil's shoulder. "Keep your holy Faith, Phil," he murmured. "If our West had more women like Mary . . . and I'm sure there are more than we imagine . . . then we would have no fear of drought, crop-failures . . . or even of Sangers and Lenins."

Phil nodded in agreement. Now was his opportunity. Calmly he laid his gift in Thad's hand. The gruff old man's eyes opened with amazement, and then joy. "A Meerschaum?" he exclaimed. Then he chuckled, speaking to no one in particular. "Now, how can anyone expect an Angel to smoke a pipe!"

"THE HANDS OF A PRIEST"

We need them in life's early morning,
We need them again at its close,
We feel their warm clasp, of true friendship
We seek them, when tasting life's woes.

When we come to this world we are sinful,
The greatest as well as the least,
And the hand that makes us as pure as angels
Is the beautiful hand of a priest!

At the Altar each day we behold them,
And the hands of a King on his throne
Are not equal to them in their greatness,
Their dignity stands all alone.

For there in the stillness of morning,
Ere the sun has emerged from the East,
There "God" rests between the pure fingers
Of the bautiful "hands of a priest".

And when we are tempted and wander
To pathways of shame, and of sin,
'Tis the hands of a priest will absolve us,
Not once, but again and again.

And when we are taking life's partner,
Other hands may prepare us a feast,
But the hand that will bless and unite us
Is the beautiful hand of a priest.

God bless them and keep them all holy
For the Host which their fingers caress,
What can a poor sinner do better?
Than to ask Him, who chose them to bless.

When the death dews on our eyelids are falling
May our courage and strength be increased
By seeing raised o'er us in blessing
The beautiful Hands of a Priest.

———o———

The Root of Evil.

A Surprise speech to the 64th Convention of American bankers was given by a Catholic priest. He used as text the words of the Bible, "Money is the root of all evil."

Father Rapp read nine verses from the Bible and then asked the bankers to be seated. He told them that money caused crooked politics, filled jails and penitentiaries, caused murders and every other form of crime. "Well for you," he said, "if you can close your eyes in death with the clear conscience that the money that has passed through your hands in life, has ben made the agent for much good in the world, and that it will not have left upon your soul a stain which cannot be washed away even by an eternity of suffering.

"The men who make revolution are those who refuse to listen until it is too late. The King and Nobles of France refused to listen to the hungry of the slums of Paris, until the French Revolution led them to the guillotine. The Czar and Nobles of Russia refused to listen to their down-trodden until Communism gained control and had them shot. The Capitalists, the banks, and men in high places, refuse to admit the injustices of materialistic Capitalism, until revolution forces their hands. Relief and such palliatives are no cure. The people living in a land of plenty will not be satisfied until they are able to get their share — until they are able to make their own living."

Champion of Forgotten Men

By Rev. A. SIMON, O.M.I.

CHAPTER FIVE

CANADA

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

Eugene de Mazenod, son of an exiled aristocrat in the days of the French revolution, spent his youth in Italy. Returning to France under the amnesty of Napoleon, the youth abjured the allurements of society to become a priest of the poor. Spurning the ecclesiastical preferments for which his abilities and aristocratic lineage might qualify him, the Abbe de Mazenod continued his missions among the lowly. In this work he was joined by a dozen other young priests. The congregation of missionaries (Oblate Fathers) which ed Mazenod founded received the immediate approbation of Pope Leo XII. The Founder himself in 1832, was consecrated Bishop and, five years later, succeeded his uncle, Fortune de Mazenod, as Bishop of Marseille.

* * *

IN the summer of 1841, there came to Marseille the saintly Bishop Bourget of Montreal, Canada. In vain had he scoured Europe for missionaries. Almost despairing of obtaining the help he desired, he came at last to Bishop de Mazenod.

"But," said the Founder of the Oblate Order, "I have so few missionaries and the foreign missions were not in our plans."

"But my people are so poor, so spiritually destitute . . . the whites and the Indians . . ."

"Poor and destitute?" The words moved the heart of this Missionary of the Poor. Was not his motto: "He hath sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor"?

At once Bishop de Mazenod sent a letter to all his priests apprizing them of the pleadings of Bishop Bourget. "Who will volunteer for the missions of Canada?" de Mazenod asked.

To a man the priests responded: "Ecce ego, mitte me" — "Behold, here I am; send me!"

In October of the same year four priests and two coadjutor brothers set out from Marseille to Le Havre and thence embarked October 22, for New York, which they reached after a voyage of thirty-five days. On December 2, 1841, they arrived at their destination, Montreal.

This foreign mission field seemed the signal for a large and sudden growth of the Order which spread so rapidly that before the Founder died in 1861 his sons were to be found, to quote Father Cooke, "on the shores of the great Atlantic, or amidst the snow clad pine forests and dismal prairies of the Hudson Bay territory, or near the margin of the Polar Sea, or among the fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains, or over the vast stretches from the base of the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, or on the plains of Texas and by the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico, or amidst the burning sands of Southern Africa, or on one of the fairest islands of the Indian Ocean, Ceylon. To all of these points in Asia, Africa, and America did de Mazenod live to see the labors of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate extended."

In 1859, Father Grollier had gone beyond the Arctic Circle to the mouth of the Mackenzie river, he who is called the Xavier of the North, the first of the "Martyrs of Cold," as Pius IX called them. . . . Here he established peace between warring Indians and Eskimos, and on September 14, Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, erected a Cross bearing the inscription, "Viderent fines terrae salutare Dei nostri." ("All the ends of the earth have seen the glory of our God.")

To the Indian chieftain he gave a picture of Our Lady on which was written: "All generations shall call me blessed."

The year 1841 saw the Oblates in Canada; 1847, in Ceylon; 1849, in the United States and Great Britain; 1852, South Africa; 1885, Germany; 1893, Spain; 1894, Australia; 1901, Belgium; 1902, Italy; 1912, Czechoslovakia; 1919, Poland; 1925, Bolivia; 1926, Uruguay; 1931, Belgian Congo; 1934, Indo-China. And today one Cardinal; 17 Bishops; two Prefects Apostolic and 5,462 Oblates are preaching the Gospel to the poor in two dialects and fifty-two languages.

* * *

Bishop de Mazenod shared in the joys and the sorrows, the sufferings of all his children—of the members of his diocese, and of his missionary sons at home and abroad.

When de Mazenod became Bishop of Marseilles in 1837, the Catholic population of Marseille numbered 160,000; 69 parishes; 260 priests, secular and regular. When the saintly pontiff died in 1861, there were in the same diocese 289,000 souls; 77 parishes; 350 priests. There was an orphanage; and a home for girls; a home for the aged and the blind; an association to feed, clothe, and lodge poor children; another to take care of poor families and see to the education of their children.

One club provided facilities each Sunday and holy day of obligation for sport, athletics, and opportunity for self-improvement. Four hundred young men participated each Sunday. Another club was open every day beginning at 5 p.m. for boys and men, and offered instruction and recreation, and to the wayfarer and down-and-outer food and lodging. A club for working girls which at de Mazenod's death numbered 650 members, did all the work of the modern Queen's Daughters' work. A group of well-to-do ladies harbored the unemployed girl and found work for her; helped the poor and unfortunate women; kept a watch on morals generally. Hospitals in the charge of religious men and women took care of the sick. Foreigners were taken care of by priests of their own nationality or by such as knew the language of the people whom they were shepherding. He begged money for, and built the cathedral and the shrine in honor of our Lady. He who had been so opposed by the French government because of his loyal and fearless championing of the Holy See was appointed to the French Senate in 1856 by Napoleon III.

Meanwhile de Mazenod kept in close touch with his spiritual sons in their far-flung fields. He shared their joys and their sorrows, their hopes and their disappointments. When they did not write, he chided them; when they came to visit him he listened to them like an eager child; and guided and consoled and encouraged them.

During the Founder's life six of his spiritual sons were appointed Bishops. He insisted on the privilege of consecrating all of them himself. Among these Bishops was Cardinal Suibert, Cardinal Archbishop of Paris and Vital Grandin, the first Bishop of St. Albert, in Alberta, Canada. At the time of the latter's consecration the normal time for the voyage from St. Albert to Montreal took two years; one summer (long trips were not undertaken in the winter) from St. Albert to St. Boniface in Manitoba; a second summer from St. Boniface to Montreal, thence to Marseilles.

On the occasion of that consecration and the visit which followed, de Mazenod noticed that Bishop Grandin ate scarcely anything but bread.

"And why?" asked the Founder.

"Because I am so fond of it," said Bishop Grandin, "and in the Missions we have no bread."



Tears came to the Founder's eyes... A few years later Louis Venillot glorified Bishop Grandin by the title "The Lousy Bishop." He died in the odor of sanctity and the cause for his canonization was introduced several years ago.

* * *

De Mazenod was a true son of Provence. One who knew well that people, so complex of character, that dwell on the shores of the Mediterranean, said of them, "In appearance they are merry, but their heart is in tears." Of great intellectual endowments, highly impressionable, they are full of contrasts — a strange mixture of tenderness and strength, of the gentle and the harsh. The emotions of piety, of joy and sorrow, of admiration and aversion, of love and hate, are so violent that strangers sometimes tremble in the presence of such passions. The ardor of emotions makes sound reasoning difficult; judgment becomes partial and unsound; exaggerations and generalizations result. The heart overflows in love, or contracts at the icy breath of ingratitude or misunderstanding, and the will easily degenerates into stubbornness.

Some such a tempestuous complex was Eugene de Mazenod by nature. His spiritual adviser in Venice, Father Bartolo, wrote to him in Palermo in 1799: "I shall tell you frankly what I think. If I know you, you will never do things by halves. You will do either much good or much evil."

Because he had dedicated himself to God from his tenderest years, Eugene de Mazenod did much good in his life. But his character caused him many a struggle. One who did not know him well might, from certain of his actions or writings, be inclined to judge him as harsh, imperious and uncompromising. Especially when he defended his personal rights or those of the Holy See, which he so unflinchingly championed and for which he suffered much, not only at the hands of civil authority but also of certain of the Bishops

Continued on page 25

SYSTEM

By CARL WESTBROOK



EVENING devotions were long since over. Dark except for the sanctuary lamp and what few candles burned at side altars, St. Rita's was deserted. The solitary figure kneeling some several pews ahead didn't matter. Here was quiet enough, peace enough, solitude enough. It was what Ted Marvin wanted. It was what he needed.

He entered the last pew. He did not kneel, but sat; for these casual visits of his seldon began with a prayer although they invariably ended in one. Later, when irritation passed, and despondency and nettling unrest, would come a p a t e r; but not just yet. First he must rid mind of unpleasant memories.

"Aren't there any nice girls?" he wondered.

Of course, what he meant was: Where might he find them? Or, more accurately: Where might he find just one—t h e one? "Like her, for instance." His eyes, accustomed now to the dim interior, lingered on the girl. There seemed a tenderness about her, something infinitely soft and gentle, a wistfulness that stirred him strangely.

Perhaps it was the posture of a suppliant — of a girl who prayed unconscious that any watched; it may have been the uncertain light; possibly it was fancy that contrasted this one with those he knew. Perhaps, too, he saw a difference simply because he wished to see a difference.

As to wishes, certainly no doubt existed. Marvin's acquaintances were men and women who worked hard. They played that way. Their idea of relaxation and enjoyment was a touring of the high lights, a hitting of hot spots; conduct shifting in the kaleidoscope of rapid change, startling, abrupt, disconcertingly frank. This, Marvin detested. He preferred moderation in pleasures. He desired friends—one at least — most emphatically, one — with similar inclinations. "Someone like her."

Yet, to find that someone seemed impossible; beyond, even, the ingenuity and the powers of St. Rita—Rita, Saint of the Impossible. Assuredly, it was beyond Marvin's.

Travelling auditor for a group of chain stores covering coast territory, he never found himself in any one spot long enough to call it home or even headquarters. He could not even claim a parish membership. Any parish between Canada and Mexico was his parish; any Catholic church along his route, his church; and rarely did he attend the same one twice in succession. He belonged to no club, no lodge, no sodality. In his circumstances it was no use.

What chance, therefore, of friendships of the sort desired?

Undoubtedly, St. Rita had a job on hand. Very big one, too.

"Maybe it takes a system," he thought, glumly. He glanced at his watch: five to eleven: time for a little prayer and that was all: the city's churches closed at eleven.

He knelt.

Brother Phillip came down the center aisle. Marvin got up to go. So did the girl. The three met in the vestibule.

"Good night," said Brother Phillip.

"Good night," said the other two so surprisingly in unison one might have doubted two voices spoke. Indeed, it took a fleeting second before the fact was grasped.

"Now that," chuckled Brother Phillip, "came like a one wave station over a double-barreled radio."

"It did, didn't it?" smiled Marvin.

"Exactly," said the girl.

The two walked down the steps together. The two walked up the street together.

* * *

Brother Phillip scowled. Picking up girls at church didn't appeal to him. Picking up girls anywhere didn't appeal to him. He used to pound pavements in a policeman's uniform before he turned lay brother and his opinion on pick-ups was apt to be at times forcibly expressed. Of course, they might have known each other, but he didn't think so. Again, he himself may have been partly responsible for the pick-up, but he scowled anyway. He scowled regardless of the fact that he could think of plenty places worse than church to pick up girls. He scowled regardless of the fact that, for the life of him, he could not think of a better place to pick them up. "No good," scowled Brother Phillip. "It's not the — system."

So far as the couple were concerned, they were already a block away, conversing unaffectedly, unrestrainedly, with never a thought of Brother Phillip or of Brother Phillip's notions anent pick-ups or systems. Their meeting, informal though it was, had occurred quite naturally, entirely in accord with the liberties of the times. Neither remarked it.

At the second block they were relating personal histories.

"I'm just visiting my aunt," informed Letty Harris, apropos of something or other, along about the fourth block. "I live in Elkton."

"Good business there," commented Ted. "We've a branch at Elkton. I hit it every so often. Auditing for the Consolidated, you know."

"Oh, you travel?"

"Bellingham to San Diego."

"My! how I'd like that."

"Sure? Its fearfully lonesome running up and down the coast, passing millions of people not one of whom you care a rap about, not one of whom cares a rap about you. On the road you've no friends."

"No argument there," said Letty. "I haven't any friends. Most everybody's married in Elkton; those who aren't — well you know what a boom town is."

"Yes," said Ted, drily. "I know. No different from others. They're all the same. I'm fed up with fifteen hundred miles of 'em. You'd be too, before long."

"No. I wouldn't. Of course, I don't mean going forever. I just mean I'd like to see a little of the country I live in. A couple of months should do. That's not too long to spend on something that'll last for the rest of life."

"Well, one might stand a couple of months; but with me, months drag. I've a year before I can get transferred to the main office. That year seems centuries."

"A year's still better. One can see lots in a year . Just about enough. I'd say. You see, I've never been anywhere, 'cept between here and home; and an hour's train ride's nothing. Yes, it occurs to me a year's just right."

"Um." It occurred to Ted that St. Rita was a pretty fast worker.

Anyway, somebody was.

However, this seemed no idle flirtation. Neither superficiality nor make-believe obtruded. Conversation ran naturally. Sincerity, matter-of-factness predominated. Pretense played no part. It was as though this meeting had been too long looked forward to—possibly too long prayed for —for either to spoil things.

On Ted's part, this was so. He had never met a girl like this before. Her simple charm, unmarred by artifice, he found delightful, refreshing: so different from the ultra-sophistication of girls heretofore met. Her frock, a plainly designed affair, she might have made herself: a relief after the elaborate creations of revealing lines so suggestively drawn to body contours. Rouge and powder had been discreetly applied. She may not have worn any. Ted could not tell. At all events, cheeks, but delicately flushed, lacked the enameled hardness of colored bathtubs so fashionable now; mouth was not the gaudy smear so lamentably de rigueur today.

"And naturally," continued Letty, "I shouldn't care to go alone. Not much fun traveling alone."

"There isn't."

At the tenth block a suggestion for a quiet dinner at some quiet place the following night, with perhaps the talkies thrown in after, met approval. There was no dillydallying, no shilly-shallying, no beating around the bush. The invitation was extended; the invitation was accepted. When St. Rita fixed things, she fixed 'em — fast. Hydraulic brakes couldn't stop her.

Maybe she had a system.

"This is Aunt Lilly's," said Letty in the middle of the twelfth block. "Good night."

"Good night," said Ted. "Tomorrow, then?"

"Tomorrow." She ran lightly up the steps; and that was all there was to the adieu.

However, Ted never said good-bye any other way, so he was eminently satisfied from start to finish. He sauntered off so light-hearted, he was almost light-headed.

* * *

Reckoning five days here in the city, approximately two weeks in adjacent towns and between here and Elkton, a day in Elkton plus a few more in that vicinity, he found this gave him a month close enough to Letty to see her every evening. And a month, Ted opined, was time aplenty to make up your mind.

It looked very much as though accounts were going to balance beautifully. So far as Ted could see, there wasn't a digit upside down, not a decimal out of place. There wasn't a chiseling cashier in sight, nor an embezzling manager. More: there wasn't a bump in the road, nor a lump, nor a hump. Still more: there wasn't a cockroach in a room, nor a fly in the soup.

But then, who ever heard of St. Rita putting flies in soup?

What made things even rosier was that after a year Letty would have enough of travel. Ted knew this from acquaintances on the road. A traveling man can never get his wife to accompany him after the first few trips. He has to go it alone. He's practically a bachelor. On the other hand, the office man, unable to get away, up against a wife who's constantly demanding to go, go, go, is much too much married.

Ted, observing how deftly St. Rita manipulated details, ungrudgingly conceded that those five Our Fathers constituted the best investment he ever made.

In fact, so cheerful was his mood that, when he thumbed the bell at Aunt Lilly's next night, he scarcely noticed the creature who opened the door. Ordinarily, he would have let out a snort of disgust at a thing like this. She resembled a third-rate taxi dancer, gold digging bound. Her dress fit like skin on a snake. Her face, hard enough to chip the kitchen sink, flaunted three coats of color, two of varnish. Mouth was a mess of goo. But, feeling as he did, Ted merely smiled. "Miss Harris in?" he asked, just as pleasantly as if this bird were every bit as sweet as Letty; adding, "Miss Letty Harris," so's to be sure of getting hold of the right one in case there were a flock of Harrises. "Miss Letty Har—" He stopped. He looked. He gawked. He blinked. "Letty!" Then he shuddered and said, "Oh," with the intonation of a man who's just heard he's to be hanged for Christmas.

Letty drew back, eyes frightened. "Oh," she said, slowly.

Ted rallied. In for it now, he had to go through with it. "All ready, I see. Good girl! Let's go."

Letty hesitated. "Maybe we'd better not," she began, uncertainly. "I think—"

"Fiddlesticks! C'mon."

"Well," said Letty, dubietly somewhat allayed, "come in a moment. I must tell Aunt we're leaving. She's upstairs. There's nothing wrong, is there?"

"Wrong? What could be wrong? Of course not."

Thus assured, poise partly returned. Letty excused herself. "I'll be down directly," she promised.

Ted, left alone, searched pockets for some nails to chew. It was always like this, he reflected, ruefully. No matter how lovely or sensible they at first appeared, time invariably showed them up for the bums they were. What's wrong with 'em anyhow? The whole raft seemed bedeviled with a dual personality that dressed them

decently here, outrageously there; one way during office hours, differently after. Were the big tramps ashamed of their faces that they had to smear them out of sight no sooner a fellow gets to where he feels he'd like to look at 'em a while? Is simple charm a dream, some evanescent fantasy, some Will-o'-the-wisp glimpsed once and then seen no more?

"I just can't pick 'em," he groaned. "Haven't the system.'

Well, he'd take her out. He had to. He'd show her the good time her get-up called for. Then he'd fetch her home and forget her. That's how it always ran.

He wondered if his thirty dollars would stretch through the evening. Dames, whose garbs shrieked for whoopee at one of those joints, had expensive tastes. One sure shot, a quiet restaurant was out; a second, he'd need a taxi to drag her around. His own car, (parked couple of doors below), would never do. Its fenders betrayed the forty thousand miles the speedometer boasted. A third thing, that travelogue picture, "California Missions," had to be junked.

They set off. He hauled her into the first place they happened on. It was pretty ritzy; the floor show, very. Later, they attended that spectacular revue, "Dirt of Yesteryear." 'Twas superlatively ritzy.

A rotten time was had by all, thank you kindly.

Exhalations of relief served for "Good night."

St. Rita, alas! had fallen down on the job. Maybe her system got out of whack.

Anyway, somebody's had.

* * *

Ted immediately set about forgetting. Yet, much to his surprise, greatly to chagrin, contrary to expectations and flagrantly against precedent, he found himself, next day, thinking of Letty and nothing but Letty. True, this may not have been the real Letty, but rather some creation of fancy: an ideal whose essence embraced the transient mood of the Letty who had prayed there at St. Rita's: a dream girl whose naivete paralleled the imagined naivete of the Letty with whom he had walked home. But 'twas very like Letty just the same; and inability to forget a lemon vexed him no end.

The second day it was the same; the third, worse. This was serious. When a girl preys on your mind like that, you generally wind up by marrying her. Ted wanted no wife who was one woman at lunch, another at dinner. There was too much risk she'd show up some morning for breakfast wearing a third face and figure. If that wouldn't make a chap feel like a triple bigamist, what would?

Nevertheless, thoughts of Letty persisted. Mulling over reasons, it occurred to Ted that possibly the old subconscious was at work urging disposal of the Elkton audit before Letty returned home, thus obviating chances of meeting her there: quite a likelihood in so small a town as Elkton.

Yes, he concluded; that was it. Once Elkton was off his mind, Letty would go with it.

He got the car. He twisted its nose down highway. He clipped off miles. Halfway there, he sighted a sight that made him jam on brakes precipitately, a sight that yanked out eyeballs so viciously they dangled there like loose door knobs. "What the!" he exploded. He couldn't help it. 'Twas that srt of sight. hTe sight sat on a rock beside the road. It wore no shoes but it must have worn feet because Ted saw one big toe sticking out a hole in a stocking; all the toes of the other foot stuck through the other stocking. The sight was squeezing one foot between its hands. The sight was moaning a little. Its face was streaky, grimy, sweaty. 'Twas a bedraggled sight; by no means a happy sight.

The sight was Letty!

* * *

"Hey!" He took time to poke eyes back into place. "What's the idea?" he demanded.

"The idea," said Letty, "is this." She picked up her shoes and exhibited another sight. And those shoes were a sight. A hobo would have scorned 'em. Soles flapped from uppers, hanging by a single stitch. "You," she accused, "you did that."

"Me?" Eyes bulged again. He shoved 'em back. Out they popped. He let 'em go. "Me?" He grabbed the shoes in a paroxysm of wrath. He waved them aloft in a furore of righteous indignation. "This," he shouted, incensed beyond measure by the calumny, "is not my work. I do not," he bellowed, "rip soles off women's shoes."

"You know what I mean," snapped Letty. "You're responsible. You took me to the worst dive in town—"

"It wasn't a dive. It wasn't the worst one, either."

"Oh, so you know which one's the worst? You would. Maybe you know them all, eh?"

"I don't. Anyhow, I didn't touch your shoes. Didn't even notice 'em."

"No. Of course not. You didn't notice anything. You sat there like a mummy with a grouch. You didn't even notice when the waiter spilled that stuff on me. My!" she exclaimed, with superb sarcasm, "when it comes to taking a girl out, you've certainly got a system."

"System! How about your own system? You sneak into respectable clothes for once in your life, you scrub your face down to natural color for the first time since you were born, you inveigle people into believing you're nice, you—"

"Stop! How dare you?"

"—hide in churches ready to pounce on the first—"

"Oooooh!"

"—decent guy—"

"Decent? You decent? That revue decent too?"

"Decent as the dress you wore. What was it, anyway—silk cheesecloth? Who did you think you were—Salome? Where did you expect to be taken in it—rosary devotions?"

"Say—"

"Or maybe you figured it just the thing in which to be presented to the Cardinal Bishop, Apostolic Delegate from Vatican City, hah?"

"Say!"

"Or make a tour of convents? Act sponsor at confirmation?"

"Say!"

"Aw, what's the use?" He threw up hands in gesture of despair. "Move over." He sat down. "And to think I fell for a girl like you! What you doing here?"

"I—I'm sitting."

"Why? What for?"

"My—my feet hurt."

"Why? What for?"

"I—I've been walking on 'em."

"Why? What for?"

"For—for to get home."

"What! Walking home? Thought you had a return ticket."

"I—I did; but I needed the fifty cents rebate I got for it so's to put it to the twenty-four-fifty I had so's to make the twenty-five dollars to pay for the gown."

"Gown? What gown?"

"The gown I borrowed. The cleaners couldn't get the spots out and the girl next door demanded the money."

"Holy cats! It wasn't your dress at all?"

"And I hated begging the fare from Aunt Lilly, or writing home. I'd be kidded; maybe scolded. Anyway, I thought I'd spent enough money for one trip. So I walked. Didn't figure it so far."

"Gee," said Ted. "That's swell."

"Swell? Where you get swell? Blamed if I see anything swell in it. If you had my feet you'd not, either."

"I meant," Ted explained, "about the dress not being yours. I thought all the time it belonged to you. Golly! Maybe that face didn't belong to you either, huh?"

"No," said Letty. "I got it next door, too."

"Whoops!"

"I only did it to please. Girls imagine men expect make-up."

"On buggy rides, maybe; or where the girl doesn't matter."

"Uh-huh," said Letty. "I get it. Guess I've no kick coming about the places we went. My system called for it. Wish we hadn't gone, though."

"Yeah. So do I. Gosh!" He fell silent. He picked up the shoes; stared miserably. "Letty," he said, after a bit. "Honestly, I didn't bust 'em."

"Uh-huh. I know, Ted. They wore out walking. And, say, Ted."

"Huh?"

"My feet hurt."

"Gee, I'm sorry."

"Ted."

"Huh?"

"My feet hurt."

"Gee. I'm awfully sorry."

"Ted."

"Huh?"

"My feet hurt. Aren't you going to drive me home?"

"Am I!" said Ted, waking up. "A m I!"

"Ah," breathed Letty. "That's the system."

* * *

At all events, it served to take affairs out of the realms of the Impossible, out of the concern of the accommodating Rita. The good Saint busied herself with other problems, giving no further thought to her erstwhile proteges until one evening, say two weeks later, when they drove by on their way to Aunt Lilly's.

"I think we ought to stop a minute," said Letty.

"I think so, too," said Ted.

Being five to eleven, there was, of course, only time for just a little prayer; but Rita was pleased tremendously. She credited a goodly payment on account. For Rita, like other saints, was frequently not paid anything at all.

And at eleven sharp, Brother Phillip came down the middle aisle. He saw the two get up and leave. This time, he didn't scowl. Instead, he nodded approvingly. Sweethearts he had seen come to mass together; sweethearts he had seen come to stations together, and to rosary together; but this was the first time he had ever seen sweethearts making little visits to church together, in between times.

"And that," nodded Brother Phillip, "is the —s y s t e m!"

Champion of Forgotten Men

Continued from page 21

of France, — or the rights of the Church against the encroachments of civil authority, or of his own rights as Bishops, even against his own ecclesiastical superiors, or when there was a question of obedience to rules and regulations. In all these cases the tone of his writings in the words of one of the censors appointed by the Holy See to read them, is "incisive, direct and vehement and seems at times to go beyond the requirements of meekness, charity and submission to superiors." But then, continues the censor, "it must not be forgotten in what troubled times the Servant of God lived."

This, and an understanding of his character will explain the tone of his writings. For his life, his actions super-abound in humility and meekness and obedience to, and love for, the Holy See whose stout and inexorable champion he was.

(To be continued)

———o———

Streamlines- - -

— Catholic Comment Condensed

On the Power of Youth:

"If the power of youth could largely reform and organize the government of a nation in Europe what might it not do in America? Enlisted on the side of righteousness it might almost make a new and better world."

* * *

On Persecution in Germany:

"We shall not hesitate to give the true name to things in Germany. We know there is persecution, and persecution which has hardly ever been so frightful and grave."—Pope Pius XI.

* * *

On Mother Love:

"At long last—about the only thing that cannot be analyzed is mother-love. You may lose her, but she can never lose you. Who is it that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things? You do not know? I will tell you: It's your mother."

* * *

On Haters of Authority:

"Those who are today charging that the Catholic Church is unfriendly to democracy are generally opposed to any institution which insists on adherence to the principle of authority."

* * *

On the Spanish Question:

"All over Franco's territory there is complete religious freedom; people can go to church or not as they choose; on the other side there can be no open practice of religion."





ASK ME ANOTHER

QUESTION BOX
Conducted by
PROFESSOR WISEMAN

Q.:—How can Priests advise as to the duties of a married state when they have no practical experience of it?

A.:—"The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall the law at his mouth." — Mal. II., 7. The married state is not exempt from God's laws, and the priests must know those laws. Every priest studies all the possible duties of marriage from a moral point of view during a long course of theology before he enters the Confessional at all. If you say that a priest cannot explain those laws to people because he himself is not married, will you say that a trained lawyer has no right to explain the law of the land to a plumber concerning that individual's trade because he himself has never so much as soldered a jam-tin?

* * *

Q.:—Is Fascism agreeable to the Catholic Faith, or ought it to be condemned?

A.:—Fascism as a system of government is to be condemned only if it holds erroneous doctrines. The Catholic Church has had conflicts with it in Italy, because it held that man was made for the State, that the training of children was primarily the prerogative of the State, etc. Where Fascism tends to concentrate people on material and physical development to the detriment of spiritual development, it is certainly not commendable.

* * *

Q.:—Why is the Pope the head of the Catholic Church?

A.:—The Pope is the head of the Catholic Church because he is the successor of St. Peter, who was made the chief of the Apostles and head of the Church by its Founder, Jesus Christ, when He said: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. XVI, 18, 19).

Christ founded His Church for all time and intended that St. Peter was to reign as its head in an unbroken succession of Popes, who have been and are the Bishops of Rome. The list of the long line of Popes can be traced from Pius XI, now reigning, back to St. Peter, the head of the Apostles, chosen by Christ.

* * *

Q.:—On entering a Catholic Church I noticed people taking holy water. What is this?

A.:—Holy water is placed at the door of Catholic churches to remind us of the waters of Baptism which once flowed over our foreheads, to signify that we are not worthy to enter into the Presence of Christ without purification, and to forgive us those venial sins for which we are sorry, as well as remitting the temporal punishment due to our sins according to the measure of our regret and contrition. I do not know how you feel, but I know that I a m not worthy to enter into the Presence of God in a Catholic Church. When Moses approached the burning bush, God said to him, "Come not hither. Put off the shoes from thy feet, fo rthe place whereon thou standest is holy ground." To Catholics it is a joy to be able to make straight for the holy water font on entering into the Presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament, and to make use of those waters of purification, asking God to make them a little more fit to áppear before Him.

* * *

Frage: Was ist von Beichten zu halten, bei denen Beichtvater und Beichtkind sich gegenseitig nicht verständigen können?

Antwort: Wenn der Beichtvater die Sprache des Beichtkindes nicht versteht, und umgekehrt, so wird die Beichte dadurch auf keinen Fall ungültig, und das Beichtkind soll ruhig weiterhin zu dem betreffenden Priester zur Beichte gehen, wenn ihm keine Gelegenheit zur Beichte in seiner Muttersprache gegeben wird.

Bedenkliih.

— Warum wollen Sie Fräulein N. eigentlich nicht heiraten?

— Wissen Sie, ihre Vergangenheit . . . .

— Ich bitte Sie: die ist doch tadellos!

— Ja. Aber etwas reichlich lang.

SWEET PEST



BILL DONOVAN, stage director of the summer theater at Wee Cove, Maine, was indulging in a first-class case of homesickness. Striding up and down backstage, as Pat Brown, his best friend, painted scenery for next week's play, he dwelt longingly and lovingly on Broadway's virtues.

"I'll take Wee Cove," replied Bill by way of argument. "Broadway and 42nd Street! Whew! Hot, sticky and sultry. No shade anywhere. I repeat, I'll take Wee Cove."

"I guess the idle rich have touched your hitherto horny hide. You and the rest of the company seem to be enjoying the effects of some plutocratic drug. One glance from a million dollar baby and you immediately lose sight of the fact that we're supposed to be individualistic artists out to make a living — not something on a string, pulled one way then another."

"I wouldn't know. Not being a Thespian, no one looks at me—excepting of course your Pest, and speaking of pests, which we weren't, here she comes!"

"Let me out of here!" cried Bill, too late. The Pest, indefatigable and dauntless, had seen Bill first.

She came in unannounced, as she had weeks before when the season opened. Her red-gold hair was just as impudently unruly, her wide open, heavily lashed brown eyes still had the unbelieving stare of a child glimpsing an imitation paradise.

Their first conversation had gone something like this:

Bill: I suppose you just know you could be a great actress if given a chance.

Eileen: I don't suppose at all. In fact, I'm sure I'd be terrible.

Bill: Then, if I may ask, what are you doing here during rehearsals?

Eileen: Oh, I don't mind rehearsals. Go right ahead. I like the way it smells.

Bill sniffed. She laughed at him. Manfully, he controlled the impulse to chastise her where it would do the most good.

Bill: Maybe I'm wrong, but for a moment I thought this was the Metropolitan Museum.

Eileen: Your nose is running on three cylinders. The Museum knows no such perfume.

Bill: (gasping) Perfume!

Then his eyes had narrowed. With hands on hips and feet spread, he glared.

Bill: I get it, smart girl. You've been reading too much about the lure of grease paint.

She wrinkled her cute nose, disagreeing.

Eileen: No such thing. Do you see that man over there? (Pointing to Pat) Well, I think his paint is delicious. Isn't it just too grand!

Bill scored nothing on that play.

Eileen: You're so accustomed to every stage-struck girl beseeching you for small parts — but I don't want a small part. I don't want any part at all. Would it be asking too much if I stand and watch him paint scenery?

It had gone on day after day and week after week, with Eileen later insisting she could too paint scenery, and when could she start?

Pat and Eileen enjoyed a beautiful friendship from the first, which made Bill more aggrieved than ever. Pat accepted invitations to Eileen's home, developed a genuine fondness for her old grandfather, but Bill withdrew more snugly than ever within his stubborn Irish shell, until that moment when he announced they were going to present a revival of "Lovely But Lonely" — and the fireworks started!

The play hadn't been presented since its long successful run forty years before, and Bill had some very definite ideas how he wanted it done. Pat went off enthusiastically on another tangent, and capping the climax, Eileen jumped into the fray with some pretty iron-bound, un-budge-able notions about the settings.

The atmosphere had a strong suggestion of uncorked dynamite, liberally seasoned with T. N. T. Each contestant carried a flaming torch in the eager hope of falling into a tank of nice, fresh gasoline.

* * *

On this occasion, when Eileen entered, some grinning, toothless demon of misfortune pulled strings and set in motion a whole chain of incalculable events.

Pat, on his scaffolding, turned to wave a green paint-drenched brush at his fairest, would-be rival. That charming person stuck out her tongue the tiniest bit, but her friendly eyes belied any unpleasantness. Bill tried to glower and succeeded in emitting a half-way grouchy "Hello, Pest!"

What followed was kaleidescopic.

Pat attempted to repeat the gallant waving of the brush, changing his stance. A bucket of paint teetered, hung suspended for a moment, then plunged earthwards. Pat followed. Bill and Eileen seemed rooted to the floor for a blind space of hours, then raced to the huddled figure. For a moment, Pat's eyes opened, he tried to smile, murmured feebly "I'm okay, fella," and dropped swiftly into oblivion.

The hastily summoned doctor made a rapid examination and laconically advised moving Pat somewhere for a long stay. "Broken ankle and wrist." Eileen, in a moment, had decided that Pat's things be moved from the small hotel to her home, where her old servant Bridget could provide him with the best of care.

Then Eileen questioned. "What are you going to do about next week's scenes?"

"Send to New York, I guess," Bill replied

dolefully.

"Oh, Bill," cried Eileen, "don't be so stubborn. Let me do them. I know I could."

"You're balmy!" snapped Bill.

"You're stupid!" retorted Eileen. "You don't deserve to have me ready to jump in Bill's boots, and unless you want to fold up next week for lack of scenery, you'd better thaw. Besides," she threw in sagely, "it's too late to rehearse a new show."

"Thought of everything, smarty!" he answered gloomily. "Let the whole coast of Maine laugh. Go ahead, grab a brush. I know when I'm licked. But if you have to fall off the scaffolding, please land on your neck!"

* * *

Eileen "grabbed" a brush. She mixed paint and spread paint. She cut canvas and hammered wooden skeleton frames on which to hang it. She used yards of gossamer-thin fabric and painted a fairyland of flowers and leaves on it. The two belligerents studiously ignored each other. But Monday night came, and Eileen barely finished the last prop before the stagehands were pushing it away from her onto the stage. She sighed tiredly, and was aware for the first time of her overworked muscles and aching bones.

She looked for Bill, but that gentleman was, strangely for him, nowhere to be seen. The cast was assembling in the wings ready to take their cues. She dashed into a dressing room and splashed through the luxury of soap suds, cold creams and a dash of powder. Then an overpowering desire to see her work, as the audience would see it, drove her to scurry for a seat in the last row just as the curtain rose.

Before the lights were lowered, she saw Bill standing in the rear. "Why, he's never out front on a first night!" she thought. Her eyes filled with smarting tears. "The suspicious old dodo—" a tear splashed — "he's resentful of my scenery. Served him right if the whole silly business fell on his wooden head! He wants it to go haywire to justify his bull-headedness."

The first expectant silence as the audience settled itself for an evening's entertainment was followed by a gasp of common delight. Then applause broke over the darkness. The stage was empty of players, so Eileen knew the appreciation was meant for the first setting. The pent-up exasperation at once washed away. She had succeeded in bringing delight and beauty to others! Life was something wrapped in a warm glow.

As the last curtain lowered, she saw Bill, still standing there with the look of a man who sees miracles and yet doesn't believe. Then pompous old Mr. Winthrop paused beside Bill and his voice carried.

"I wouldn't have missed this show for a million!" Mr. Winthrop was always lavish with his wealth conversationally. "My word, you carried me back forty years. You're not old enough to have seen the original production, but you have in every beautiful, delightful scene an exact reproduction of 'Lovely But Lonely'—I wish they'd bring back more of those old plays. Acting was a c t i n g then. None of your wise-cracking passing for genius. Thanks for a wonderful evening. Count on my being back next week." The old gentleman went away entranced with his memories. He failed to notice that a bewildered young man hadn't framed one word in reply.

Eileen escaped through a side door. She knew she had nothing to say to Bill that night.

* * *

In the weeks that followed, Bill gave Eileen free rein in scenic matters. He never mentioned old Mr. Winthrop's remarks, and when Eileen felt her heart heavy within her, pride prevented her making the first friendly gesture.

On the first chill days of autumn, seasonal residents began boarding up the great glass windows of their summer mansions, and migrated to the town houses in the cities to the south. Summer was over, and the stock company was about to fold its tent and, perhaps more noisily than Arabs, steal away.

On the last Sunday, the three friends went to the altar rail together, then drove back to Eileen's, crowding the front seat of Bill's roadster. Pat viewed first one, then another with a puzzled frown. Goodbyes were called with an attempt at gaiety, and when the car had roared down the drive into the main road, Eileen found herself unaccountably crying. But why, she asked herself. Why?

Autumn swiftly shed her colorful beauty, and then snow came to drench the rugged coast town with fragile, spotless loveliness. New Year's Eve brought a greeting from New York and an apologetic Bill. He had been so rushed on a new play opening New Year's Day that the spirit of Christmas had brushed him by until Christmas Eve and Midnight Mass.

It was a week later that a letter postmarked from a little city on the Hudson river reached Eileen. The writing was Bill's, and she wondered what took him away from New York. She read with pleasant surprise. Bill's new show had enjoyed a brilliant opening and a long run was predicted by the army of critics. That wasn't so amazing, and Eileen smiled at the energetic, work-filled, driving weeks that must have preceded the opening. But Bill had left the city and his successful show. He was spending a week of quiet seclusion at a well-known Retreat House, taking stock of himself and seeking to draw closer to that great Heart Who experienced none of the rushing and driving that seemed to be the code of present-day living.

Bill, pensive in a cloistered house of prayer seemed at first unbelievable but the deeper her thoughts went, the more natural it seemed. Of course! Retreats were just made for folks like Bill. People in little towns where practically every home is within the shadow of the Church needed no withdrawing from the world. They had formed the habit of dropping into the church for a few silent minutes of prayer almost every day of their lives. It was as close to them as the hearths within their own homes. But the poor Bills of the world — they knew no hours. They were constantly being driven by the need within them to create perfection in chosen careers, and to keep ahead of that closing tide of competition that might sweep over them in an all-consuming wave.

She answered his letter, sending it to his old New York address, inviting him when he returned to the city to take a train and visit Wee Cove again. A wire, a day or so later carried his eager acceptance.

* * *

"Hello, Bill, hello!" she called out to him from her blanket-wrapped perch on the old horse-drawn sleigh. Happily, she saw all the tired lines had vanished from his face, leaving it younger and infiinitely more boyish.

They enjoyed a bantering exchange of all that had happened since their last meeting. Supper in the old dining room of the picturesque old house was a cheerful, homey experience with Eileen's grandfather hanging on to Bill's every word.

Later, they drifted to the living room to bask in the glow from the open fire. Then Bill said, "You know, I really didn't come all the way up here just to take in the winter beauties and dine sumptuously, though both were well worth the trip. I came to probe something that has been on my mind since last summer. Tell me, where did you learn to paint scenery? You could become quite successful in the theatrical centers. Why didn'tt you tell me you were trying to crash the stock company? And why bury talents like yours in a place like this, lovely as it is?"

She left the room and returned with both their coats before answering. "Let's take a run out to the barn."

'Way in the back of the barn, in a section kept separate, were groups of appurtenances which Bill quickly recognized as stage scenery. Upon closer examination, he suddenly had the feeling he was backstage at the little theater during the run of "Lovely But Lonely." The scenery was identical, but was unmistakably older.

"I was raised on this, Bill," she stated simply.

"But," broke in Bill, "I still don't understand."

"Let's get back to the house," was Eileen's answer.

Once inside, she settled herself in a huge chair before the fire while Bill leaned an arm on the stone mantlepiece.

"Did you ever hear of Christopher and Kathleen Adams?"

"Sure," answered Bill. "Who hasn't? There'll never be another Kathleen Adams according to those who saw her. And Christopher Adams — but you never saw them, you couldn't have known them."

"Kathleen Adams was my mother — Christopher Adams my grandfather. When his eyesight began to fail and he knew he could no longer create and design the stage settings that were life itself to him, he bought this old farm. My mother continued her acting career, though I don't remember her. She died shortly after I was born, so grandfather brought me up here.

"He wanted me to try and land a job with you to justify all the things he taught me. It wasn't important to me at first, though later it came to be. You'll never know the pleasure it afforded him to know the talent lives on. 'Lovely But Lonely' he considered his greatest work. After it closed, he bought the scenery from the producers and it was the only part of his whole career he wanted with him up here."

"Why didn't you tell me that at first, Eileen? It would have made everything so different!"

"Because, Bill, many of these people knew him in the old days, and he was so terribly sensitive about his eyes! But he's slowly changing now. He doesn't mind if I tell you. Can you understand?"

"Quite. You see, I've changed since last summer, too. When I realized that you could do things that weren't advertised, it dawned on me that the world was probably full of people who are great in their own way, and we'd never get to know their talents if it weren't for accidents like Pat's. But most important of all, I need you, more than you'll ever know, to make me feel that I've got a right to breathe and live and dream. When I went to the Retreat House I knew my world was wrong, but I didn't know what was lacking. There I realized it was you — always has been you — from that moment you walked in on a rehearsal and called paint 'perfume' — is it so surprising?"

"Oh, Bill, is that it?"

"Is what it?" asked Bill with just a shade of the old Bill in his tone.

"Have I been in love with you, too, all this time? Is that why you've never been out of my mind — is that why the world has seemed so right — and perfect — since I knew you were coming here?"

"I hope so, Darling Pest," murmured Bill, gathering her close in his arms, "but we certainly wasted a lot of precious time finding out!"

(St. Anthony Messenger.)



"FAKERS"

A British member of parliament made a striking statement about Red Spain. Referring to the fifteen thousand who were shot in "Loyalist" Spain, he said:

"Foreign Cheka agents (Russian Secret Police) are in Spain and are operating by the hundreds. Cowardly assassins who are paid by Russian Stalinist Cheka are imitating the loathsome atrocities of the Dark Ages. Steel cages are kept for the men and women who are not supporters of Russian Control . . . This foul work of wholesale murder is in the hands and grip of Stalin, because he is furnishing military aid. His henchmen slander, lie, misrepresent, and finally torture and murder in order to get control. A knife in the back is the method of Moscow, and I know from experience and investigation. When the simple appeal of the 'Popular Front' or 'United Front' is made, remember that behind it are the gunmen, machine guns, knuckle-dusters, leaded batons, bloody toe-plates of boots that have kicked men and women to death, steel cages, chains, handcuffs, a lying propaganda machine that destroys the character of men and women, cemeteries of dead bodies in Spain and Russia, and **a Russian espionage machine in each country—including Great Britain and America—that has yet to be unmasked."**

Have we not Spies, the Cheka, men on the payroll of Russia, in America, in Canada, who work to undermine our democracy? It is regrettable that these facts on the Spanish Civil War do not reach the reading public.

PRESS MONTH

What have you done for the Catholic Press?

MUSSOLINI CHOOSES HIS SUCCESSOR

Fascism Slowly Gives Way to Real Democracy.

ITALY has a new constitution—an exceedingly interesting affair. It combines personal leadership with a popular parliamentary system along democratic lines. It is based on the organized interests of Labor, Capital and the Professions.

This new set-up will be on trial for many years to come, but it ought to be given a real chance. Other forms of parliamentary democracy have not always proven altogether successful. Serious abuses and social injustices have crept in. Class struggle and the dictatorship of the moneyed bourgeoisie over the poor have created the social upheavals the world is witnessing today. The masses have been reduced to mere wage slaves of a crude and cruel economic system. Millions are on the dole. The ever increasing taxation, unemployment, poverty in the midst of plenty have caused the proletariat to seize dictatorship through bloody revolutions.

We do not want a dictatorship. We do want a revolution. A reformation. We must fight for a return to genuine and real democracy based on real representative government, which is for and by the people not only in name but in fact. Partyism and beaurocracy must go and the sooner our politicians realize that fundamental fact the better. The world needs statesmen with vision, not politicians that can see only as far as the next election.

We may thank God that one great civilized country is willing to try a new experiment. Let us be fair and watch it grow. Instead of shouting "feudalism" and "fascism" let us first try to understand the social and economic values of a system that has revolutionized almost the whole of Europe.

Mussolini's new constitution is based on the Guild System. It is the corner-stone of the so-called Corporate State. Twenty-two of these Guilds have already been organized. They comprise all of the more important trades and professions. The central board of each Guild meets regularly under the chairmanship of the Minister of Corporations (a Cabinet Minister) to discuss, guide and watch over all interests which come within the scope of its activity.

In a few cases where a common agreement cannot be reached, the question is referred to the court. This court must consider all the facts of the case: the profits of industry, the cost of living, unemployment, and the principles laid down in laws which define and safeguard the rights of labor. Lockouts, sit-downs and strikes are forbidden by law. There is no sense in them since justice has taken the place of force. The guilds have been working very well for some time. Both Capital and Labor are very pleased with the results. They have brought not only industrial peace but a genuine spirit of co-operation. The Holy Father himself has recommended the Guild system.

Now we come to another part of the constitution in the Italian House of Representatives, which numbers about six hundred. Over half of the representatives are members of the Guilds. The rest are composed of representatives of other unions, professional and cultural, together with 94 provincial secretaries and the members of the Central Board of the Fascist Party. Bills introduced must first be submitted to the Guild Committee before the House can vote on them.

There is also an Upper House, the Senate, composed of life members appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister. If parliament, which has the right to reject or amend all bills, does not care for the one chosen, then the King resolves the difficulty and chooses another who is more conciliatory.

During the period of transition from party government to the democratic Corporate State, Mussolini will no doubt continue for the rest of his political life to exercise a paramount influence on the destinies of Italy, if only by his personality and popularity. From now on he will have to work through the framework of his new constitution. The period of dictatorship is therefore coming to an end. It gives way to a government of the people, for the people, and by the people—to genuine democracy.

Mussolini is wise—he knows he will not live forever. His years are numbered. He must choose "his successor". His successor is to be "the Corporate State". In other words, dictatorship gives way to constitutional parliament made up of representatives of Guilds, Unions, Vocational Associations and Professions, together with Provincial Secretaries.

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THE GREATEST OF ALL RACES

By Josephine R. Lekwitz.

The earth moves around, at a very fast pace,
And we are all entered in this worldly race,
Are you in front, gaining speed all the way,
Or are you lagging behind at the end of each day?

In this wonderful race, you may take any road,
And sometimes you're burdened with a heavy load,
Are you taking it all, with a friendly grin?
If you are, you have plenty of chances to win.

Perhaps your friends struck a much better road,
Perhaps they were granted a much lighter load.
Do you begrudge them, their wonderous luck,
Or will you reach the same goal, by travelling through much?

Now there's trouble ahead, and you're not alone,
There's another beginner to help o'er that stone.
Will you let him scramble, and ruin his life,
Just because he failed to continue the strife?

On the home stretch, you're weary, I know,
But keep on travelling, for you're still in the show,
When you have finished the race, if you're not with the rest,
At least you can say, "I've done my best."



THE JUGGLER

Condensed from the Short Story by

Arthur Stringer.

"THERE'S a guy they'll never grind down," said Gunderman's stage-manager as he watched Benjamin Spindel pocket his rejected playscript and trudge smiling and undaunted down to Broadway.

"They won't grind him down—he'll just wear down," retorted Gunderman.

For three years Spindel, fevered by the virus of stage life, had played small parts in other people's plays. Like Shakespeare, he acted parts that he might learn to write them, and meanwhile poured his energy into writing magnificent dramas which, by some odd mischance, never saw the light of day. As his parts grew smaller, his pay envelope grew thinner. But despair was unknown to him.

As Spindel climbed the stairs that night to his back-room "studio" he whistled, and affected a swagger. For he had been optimist enough to bring with him to New York a wife — a young wife who might not always appreciate the humoristic turns of destiny. She saw the script under her husband's arm and went to the window and looked out.

"My dear, those managers are positively f u n n y!" blithely avowed Spindel, as he put his play in its pigeonhole with the air of a victor putting his sword in its scabbard. "All I can say is, I'm thankful I can keep my sense of humor and see what a queer lot they are!"

"I wish they'd taken the play," said his wife, with the unimaginative immediacy of her sex, as she went back to her work of turning a last winter's skirt.

"But I'm getting closer to 'em all the time," chirped the indomitable Spindel.

And he set to work writing a new play. He had to skimp and economize, for he could now get nothing more than an occasional "super" part. But he accepted the dingy studio and the meager meals calmly. He went back to his play like an opium-smoker back to his drug. He revised and rearranged and revamped. He closed his eyes, valiantly, and cut away whole act-ends at one grim stroke, like a surgeon operating on his own flesh and blood. He re-dressed it in epigram, and decorated it with new ribbons of fancy. Then he carried it off to the manager's offices with the blind pride of a mother carrying her first-born to a baby show.

That none of them could see any beauty in it struck him as laughable. But once more he came to realize that managers were a queer lot. "If you can only keep your sense of humor at this game!" he persisted as he read Gunderman's curt note of refusal.

He set to work again, optimistic as ever. Once more he ruthlessly disemboweled and rearranged and re-articulated. "I'm learning the trick, my dear!" he jubilantly told his hollow-eyed wife as she stirred the veal stew on the hot-plate. "I can see it coming closer, every day!"

Again Spindel began the rounds of the managers' offices. And again the script came back to Spindel's dingy studio, and again it went out, and again it came back. Once more the playwright was moved to a mild and humorous wonder.

"Aren't they a funny lot?" he demanded.

"No, it's not funny," said his wife, limp and listless. "It's not funny any more."

He laughed as he put a hand on her thin shoulder. "Just keep your sense of humor, my dear, and you'll see they a r e funny!"

Spindel indulged in the extravagance of two canaries, "to liven up the studio a bit." Already he had begun a new play, and he worked on and on. Again he sent out his script, still nursing the delusion that he was going to find Fame hanging to his mailbox in the dingy front hall. And as he shuffled down in his tattered slippers, ten times a day, he thanked Heaven that he could still see the humor of it all, and went up to whistle pensively into the canary cage, and then turn once more to his writing.

One rainy morning when even the canaries refused to sing, the Ultimate Idea came to him. He had written altogether seven fine plays. None of them could be all bad; even the managers admitted that one had a good scene, and another a good curtain. Why not tie them up in one craft, cut away what was not needed, and let that one final venture swing out to sink or swim?

This idea became an obsession. The work-worn Spindel threw himself into the task with a fury that disturbed even his wife, who absented herself more and more from that paper-littered room where he strode up and down, enacting roles. She upbraided him for scandalizing the neighbors with his climacteric shouts of scorn and triumph. But he forgot his wife and her existence. He merely looked at her in his vacant way when she defiantly told him she was off to look for work of her own. He only nodded assent when she informed him that her cousin, Jim Ecklin, was taking her to the theater.

For Spindel was engaged in an extraordinary juggling feat. Into that final play he was crowding every worthwhile bit from everything he had ever written, much like a shipwrecked traveler packing into one bag the cream of his belongings. He was molding his whole life into one forlorn amalgam.

Then once more he polished and furbished it, and so pretentious and flashing did that new facade stand to him that for the first time in his life he indited a peremptory letter in which he put forth certain peremptory demands, and sent both letter and script off to Gunderman, knowing well that this time it was all or nothing.

Meantime, the rigors of December reminded the playwright that both the body and its habitation were in need of fuel. So Spindel earned a few dollars as a ticket-taker in a movie house. His gas bills and arrears of rent he could for the time ignore. Those claims which rose from the pit of the stomach, however, could not be ignored. As he trudged homeward, with his half-pound of Hamburger steak, he looked more and more anxiously into the mailbox. But it was always empty.

Spindel began to wonder if even a sense of

humor could not lose its elasticity. One morning he invaded Gunderman's Broadway stronghold. Gunderman, he was told, was in Chicago. For a week or two, nothing could be done.

That night his wife came home, silent and self-contained. She told him she had already eaten supper, but later in the evening she broke into tears, for no appreciable reason. Next day Spindel began pawning things, surreptitiously taken from their room.

For days he wandered about the city looking for work, as destitute of direction as a lost child. Late in the afternoon of the fourth day he trudged back to his "studio", a little dizzy, and weak in the knees.

In the mailbox he found two letters. He climbed the stairs, step by step, and as he let himself into his room he saw a square of paper tacked on his door. It was a "dispossess" notice. Slowly he pulled it from the soiled panel, and closed the door after him.

"Allie," he called.

Then he saw with relief that his wife was not there. He sat down by the window, putting the letters on the ledge. He was leisurely about it, yet he could feel his heart pounding.

The first letter was in his wife's handwriting. He slowly unfolded the single sheet and read:

> I've tried hard to stay with you, Benny. But a woman's got to have clothes and things. I'm going to New Orleans with Jim this afternoon. It's the only thing left for me. I hate to go this way, but I can't stand it any longer.
>
> Allie.

Spindel read the penciled sheet a second time. Then he turned the other letter over in his hand. He found it hard to open, for a fog seemed to float between him and the paper. The first thing that struck him was the blue tint of the oblong enclosure. He looked at it, vacantly, then saw it was a check.

The letter neither startled nor elated him. He was vaguely conscious that Gunderman was writing to say that the four--act play, entitled "Fool's Gold," by Benjamin Spindel, would be put in rehearsal the following Monday, for a New York production. It also requested a receipt for the $1000 in advance royalties, duly enclosed, the additional $500 advance on the London production, and — but Spindel was no longer interested.

He read the first letter again.

"I'm going to New Orleans with Jim this afternoon."

He read it aloud, as though the words were written in a foreign tongue, as though it were a text he could not comprehend. He looked at the blue check. Then he laughed, quietly, softly, without mirth and without emotion.

He pinned the two letters together, and taking a clean sheet of paper, wrote on it nine words: "This is too much for my sense of humor!"

Spindel put the three slips of paper on a table in the center of the shadowy room. Then he carefully lifted the canary cage from its hook and placed it on the floor, outside his door. He locked the door as he stepped inside. He took newspapers and tore them into strips. With these he battened the cracks about the door, and the window-sashes. As he crossed the room, he read aloud the words he had written: "This is too much for my sense of humor!"

Calmly he drew the blinds, groped his way to where the tubing, connecting the hot-plate with the gas pipe, ran along the wall, and padded about until he found the stop-cock. He turned it on, full.

Spindel lay down on the sagging couch, remembering to cover himself with the worn comforter. He closed his eyes. He ony knew that he was tired, very tired. Then he fell asleep.

* * *

Spindel awoke to find his wife there at midnight, crying like a frightened child.

"Oh, I couldn't do it, Benny!" she wailed, bathed in her tears of contrition, as he stumbled to the door and swung it open. She clutched at his dazed and silent figure. She clung to him in an ecstasy of despair.

"Oh, Benny, what'll we do? What'll we do?"

"Do? How?" asked the still-dazed Spindel.

"They've ordered us out!" she wept. "We've no money. And they came and turned the gas off on us this morning!"

Spindel, groping for her shaking body in the darkness, locked his arms about her and laughed.